In Search of a Synthesis of Aesthetic and Religious Ideals: 
The Works of Kamo no Chōmei 
(1155-1216)

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Declaration

Except where otherwise indicated
this thesis is my own work.

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March 1989
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This study sets out to investigate certain aspects of classical Japanese Buddhist literature. There has been a good deal of detailed work in this field in recent times. The question, however, of the interaction between literature and Buddhism, and the implications of this interaction for an understanding of the cultural development of Japan, have remained little explored. William LaFleur's work, The Karma of Words, is for example, one of the few works in English to have taken up this issue as a central problem for investigation.\(^1\) Japanese scholars, too, have been cautious about studying this question. The reasons for this hesitation are interesting and worth spelling out briefly.

A significant revival of interest in the 'nativist' traditions in Japanese literature and culture occurred during the Tokugawa period. In some ways it would be true to say that the systematic study of 'Japanese' literature — as opposed to literature that was originally written in Chinese — began only at this time. The beginnings of this concerted effort towards the exclusive study of 'indigenous' literature are associated with a group of scholars who came to be called wagakusha or 'scholars of Japanese'. These scholars rejected classical Chinese and became fervent exponents of Shinto and of the national language and literature. Their study of Japanese culture came consciously to exclude Buddhism and Buddhist influences. 'Buddhist studies' was to be a different and quite separate discipline — though this would present considerable difficulties, as we shall see.

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\(^1\) LaFleur, William. The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Japan, California: University of California Press, 1983.
The critical writings of these scholars formed a landmark in the appreciation of Japanese culture and history, because for the first time literature written in the Japanese language came to be celebrated without qualification. An attempt was made to analyse Japanese writings and identify the particular qualities that made them truly representative of the 'Japanese' spirit. It is in this context that one can understand why, for example, Motoori Norinaga specially singled out *The Tale of Genji* and devoted a considerable amount of his energies to the study of this work.

By the eighteenth century the *wagakusha* were a formidable intellectual force, including amongst their numbers distinguished scholars such as Kamo no Mabuchi (1697-1769) and Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801). Their writings contributed in no small measure to the overthrow of the shogunate and the restoration of Imperial rule in 1868.

During this time, the tradition of Buddhist scholarship, of course, continued. The recovery and interpretation of Buddhist texts was part of a very old tradition in Japan. This work had always been undertaken chiefly by people belonging to the priesthood. What marks out the more recent period of Japanese scholarship is that this work has proceeded rather more self-consciously, in the isolation of Buddhist institutions, and in a sense in opposition to the growing scholarly interest in 'nativist' literature and culture.

Thus over the Tokugawa and Meiji periods there developed what might be called two traditions of scholarship, the one dealing exclusively with 'Buddhism', and the other with 'literature'. It was inevitable that the rigid division between these two streams of scholarship would be questioned at some later stage. Over the last few decades, many scholars of Japanese literature have argued that in order meaningfully to examine the writings of the Heian, Kamakura and Muromachi periods, it is no longer possible to study 'Buddhism' and 'literature' in total isolation, even if they had hitherto developed as two mutually exclusive disciplines. It was with this in mind that an academic conference was held in the year 1962. Significantly, it was called the *bukkyō bungaku kai*. However, the combination of the two terms, 'Buddhism' and 'literature', threw up a number of contentious issues. It resulted in tremendous confusion and much discussion.
that was at cross purposes. Following this conference, one issue of the journal *Bukkyōbungaku kenkyū*, published one issue which was devoted to the notion of *bukkyōbungaku*. The major question raised by the majority of the papers in this issue was "What is *bukkyōbungaku*?" Predictably the response was far from unanimous.²

What qualified as 'literature'? That in itself was a major question. What was 'Buddhist literature'? If every text that had a considerable presence of Buddhist words and ideas within it could be categorized as 'Buddhist literature', on what basis could a distinction be made between works such as *The Tale of Genji* and say the *Tannishō (A Collection Inspired by a Concern Over Heresy)*³ other than perhaps by quantifying the extent of its Buddhist content? Or if we are to follow the opinions of another writer in this collection, any work which expresses even an iota of doubt in Buddhism, that is to say, is not premised on unquestioning faith in the precepts of the religion, is not 'Buddhist' even if it may be 'literature'.⁴ Presumably then, the *Hōjōki* of Kamo no Chōmei can make no claim to being 'Buddhist literature', a view that would be unacceptable to many of those who had participated in this debate.

A study of this debate suggests that the way in which the problem was posed made it an unanswerable one. At one level, the very division between 'literature' and 'Buddhism' is not a very meaningful one in a study of the literary works of a period in Japan's history during which its society and culture as a whole were suffused with the Buddhist world-view. The literature of any period can hardly be separated from the major intellectual forces of that age.

Despite the subsequent attempts by many scholars from both the erstwhile 'Buddhist' and 'literature' sides to work together, there continues to be a very real divide
between the *kokubungakusha* (the heirs of the *wagakusha*) and the *bukkyōgakusha*. Most departments of literature in Japan continue to be dominated by 'nativist' scholars (*kokugakusha*). Japanese literature is still generally seen as something distinct from Buddhism, although it may be granted that this literature does on occasion reflect Buddhist themes and ideas. The interest in Buddhism in such cases goes only so far as to map out the extent of its 'influence' on what are first and foremost literary texts. Conversely, Buddhist scholars such as Shimaji Daitō, Tsukudo Reikan, Hazama Jikō and more recently Nagai Giken, Ishida Mizumaro and Yamada Shozen have brought to light a great variety of works of the medieval period, but it would be fair to say that this is done with the view to explaining how the Buddhist doctrine finds expression in the form of literature.

What is particularly striking about the literature of the Heian and Kamakura periods in Japan is precisely the absence of this kind of rigid separation between 'Buddhism' and 'literature'. It is true that the writers of these periods consciously made a division between the two domains when they addressed themselves to the question of the value and significance of 'writing'. 'Creative writing' was an act that by its very nature was worldly and hence one that led to the sin of deluded attachment. How, then, was it possible to justify writing, especially fictional writing, while at the same time remaining true to the ideals of detachment and the renunciation of worldly activities which were fundamental to the Buddhist Way? Both those litterateurs who did not formally belong to the priesthood as well as those directly committed to the Buddhist Path appear to have been exercised over this matter. Not surprisingly, they responded in a variety of ways to the question of the role and validity of artistic activities — a role and validity that had to be consciously delineated in relation to Buddhism, the dominant intellectual force and cultural idiom of the period. While divergent solutions were

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5 It is not surprising then that in describing the seminar that we mentioned earlier, one of the participants used two categories to describe the membership of the group. He pointed out that the bulk of the participants were *kokubungakusha* but that there were a sizeable number of *bukkyōgakusha* as well. See Abe Akio, "Bōzen to shita kitai", in *Bukkyō bungaku kenkyū*, Volume 12, p 78.
formulated there appears to have existed among writers of this period a consensus that this was a question that had to be answered. However, the very seriousness with which the question was treated was one indication of the strong desire of writers to deny or at any rate attempt to collapse the difference between artistic and religious activities, rather than to treat them as completely separate.

While today the scholars of Buddhism and scholars of literature are to be found in separate institutional settings, the world of the litterateur and that of the priest overlapped to a considerable degree in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Japan. Priests as well as court poets who belonged to the secular world engaged in literary activity. It was an age in which the court poet Teika composed (among other things) twenty four poems based on the Lotus sutra, and the Tendai abbot Jien composed love poetry.

To sum up, then, Japanese scholarship since the Tokugawa period has thus been marked by a division between 'literature' and 'Buddhism' of a kind that was notably absent in Japan's earlier history. This has had implications for the ways in which the literature of that earlier period has been interpreted.

The object of the present investigation is to examine the particular ways in which this question of the validity or invalidity of 'literature', and the arts more generally, came to be posed and confronted in the Kamakura period. Specifically, I examine the writings of one major figure who belonged to the aristocratic world of Kamakura Japan, Kamo no Chōmei.

There are a number of reasons why I have chosen to work on Kamo no Chōmei. First, Chōmei is a major writer, whose work, particularly the Hōjōki, retains its importance to this day — and not only because it forms part of the essential reading of all high school students in Japan.

Second, what is just as crucial for our purposes is that a wide range of his writings have survived. The extant works of Chōmei include his personal collection of poetry, the Kamo no Chōmei shū, a treatise on poetry called the Mumyōshō, a collection of Buddhist exemplary tales, the Hosshinshū, and a 'personal' account of his life as a recluse, the Hōjōki. Apart from his own works there are a number of contemporary and
near contemporary writings which tell us about Chōmei's life as a poet and musician, and the events leading to his taking the tonsure. These works, the diary of Chōmei's contemporary Minamoto Ienaga, the Jikkinshō, a work written in the mid-thirteenth century, and the Bunkidan, a late thirteenth century treatise on music, are all significant in that they give us a variety of perspectives from which to understand Chōmei's life and the works that he left to posterity.

Third, if one can indeed make a heuristic distinction between the two domains of 'the arts' and 'Buddhism', Chōmei is a very good example of a person who straddled both these worlds. He spent most of his life at court as a poet and musician, well-schooled in the artistic traditions of his time and actively involved both in the composition of poetry and in the performance of music. In his later years, however, he chose to become a Buddhist priest and live as a recluse away from the capital, devoting himself to Buddhist practices. Apart from the Kamo no Chōmei shū, all his other works are believed to have been written in his later years, after he had renounced worldly life. It is striking, however, that while these works date from his 'Buddhist' period, so to speak, they point nevertheless to his continued involvement with the world of elegance and grace that he had left behind at court, in which poetry and music played such a central part. His writings reflect the struggle of a sensitive mind attempting to synthesize the literary and aesthetic ideals of his times with Buddhist practices and the goal of enlightenment.

Fourth, while the tension between 'literary' and 'Buddhist' ideals was, as I have suggested, experienced by many writers of Chōmei's time and the periods that went before and after it, it seems to me that there are few writers who articulated this problem with such clarity and persistence as Chōmei. The fascination of Chōmei's work is that it is a fairly detailed record of an exceptional individual's attempt to think through questions that were deemed important by many litterateurs of the period. This thesis, then, is a study of one person and of his continued search for a means by which he could reconcile the disparate urges of his desire to compose poetry and play music, on
the one hand, with his belief, on the other, that this desire might well be futile or even deleterious to the religious path that he had chosen.

Following this introduction, in Chapter One, I give a fairly general survey of a variety of writings from the Heian and Kamakura periods. My object here is to examine the ways in which a confrontation between literary traditions and Buddhist ideology is both posed explicitly, and reflected more widely in the literary productions of those times. I also try to indicate the diverse 'resolutions' that authors put forward, 'resolutions' that in some instances make it possible for them to continue with their artistic activities while living the life of a good Buddhist. The term kyōgen kigo (wild words and frivolous phrases), the Buddhist proposition shōji soku nehan (samsara is nirvana), the notion of hōben or expedient means, or the ideal of suki, are only some of the many conceptual tools used by Japanese writers in attempting to clarify the place of the arts, and of poetry in particular, within a world increasingly dominated by Buddhism.

It is poetry above all that is singled out from the Kamakura period onwards as an art that needs to be cultivated seriously. It is singled out as a michi (a Way) that is on a par with the Way of the Buddha (hotoke no michi). An examination of the development of poetry as a michi is critical to an understanding of the particular ways in which literary traditions were shaped by the new religious ideals. Chapter One points to the centrality of poetry in this interaction.

Chapter Two is a selective biography of Chōmei's life. I focus here on Chōmei's activities as a court poet, and the particular circumstances that changed the course of his life and led to his move to take the tonsure and live as a recluse away from the capital. A reconstruction of some of the major events in his life perhaps helps to recreate the cultural milieu in which he lived and worked. More specifically, it may tell us something about the material and cultural context in which Chōmei developed his artistic sensibilities, sensibilities which had a powerful impact on his subsequent life as a Buddhist recluse.
Chapter Three is devoted to an examination of the concept of suki in the Heian period. This is a key concept in Chômei's writings, in his evaluation both of people whose main concern is the cultivation of an artistic pursuit, and those who have left worldly life to become Buddhist recluses. An examination of the trajectory of the term suki through the Heian period upto Chômei's times is critical to an understanding of the ways in which this aesthetic ideal of Heian court society came to be imbued with new significances and acquired an altered meaning in the hands of Chômei and his contemporaries.

Chapter Four is a study of Chômei's work on poetry, the Mumyôshô. The Mumyôshô is an interesting blend of poetic theory and of personal anecdotes about famous priests, through which Chômei illustrates the qualities and practices that he deems most important in the creation of outstanding poetry. In this view poetry is no longer merely a social pastime but a michi that requires single-minded devotion. It is the ideal of suki that Chômei singles out as being fundamental to the composition of poetry. Suki comes to be defined as complete dedication and commitment to one artistic discipline. My examination of the Mumyôshô is thus aimed at understanding the principles that Chômei outlines as being vital to poetic practice, and to establishing that the concept of suki is fundamental to his explication of these principles.

Chapter Five is devoted to Chômei's collection of tales about monks and recluses, the Hosshinshû. I wish to suggest that it is in the Hosshinshû that Chômei actually departs from the received understanding of the term suki and stretches it further to make it compatible with the primary concern of this work, which is illustrating Buddhist ideals and practices that are essential for the attainment of enlightenment. In the Hosshinshû, the practice of suki becomes an important and on occasion even indispensable precondition to the experience of religious awakening. By examining this work closely, I hope to identify those aspects of courtly culture that Chômei regards as inseparable from the conditions necessary for enlightenment. I shall try to show that it is for poetry and music above all that Chômei stakes out a special claim — namely that the cultivation
of these arts cannot but create the state of purity and detachment upon which salvation is dependent.

The final chapter, on the *Hōjōki*, continues our discussion of Chōmei's attempts at integrating 'artistic' and 'Buddhist' practices. One of the problems taken up in this chapter is the way in which this professed autobiographical account can be interpreted. One way of understanding the *Hōjōki*, I have suggested, is by looking at its construction as a text and relating it to other works such as the *Chiteiki*, which it takes as its model. This may help in not reading the *Hōjōki* too simply as a personal and therefore 'true' account of Chōmei's life and the tensions he experiences while living it. It is the dramatization of the tension between Chōmei's two abiding concerns — his love of music and poetry on the one hand, and his firm commitment to the Buddhist Path on the other — that is of particular interest in this work. Whether or not Chōmei points to the ultimate irreconciliability between these two ideals, it is significant that the problem is one that engages him throughout much of the work that he has left behind.

**Textual Note:**

The text that I have used in the study of the *Mumyōshō* is the annotated edition that appears in the *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* series.6 This edition is based on a manuscript from the early Edo period, collated with other variant texts. My study of the *Hosshinshū* and the *Hōjōki* is based on the annotated text by Miki Sumito in the *Shinchō nihon koten shūsei* series.7 Miki has used the *Taifukukōjibon* text of the *Hōjōki* which dates from the Kamakura period, and collated it with other texts such as the *Ichijōkanerabon*, a variant manuscript of the Muromachi period. *Hosshinshū* is based primarily on the printed edition of this work dating from the year 1652.

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CHAPTER I

LITERATURE AND BUDDHISM IN THE
HEIAN AND KAMAKURA PERIODS

Introduction

When the Chinese poet Po Chu'i dedicated a collection of his poetry, the Loyang anthology, to the Hsiang-shan temple in Soochow in 838, he appended to it the following apologia:

May the worldly writings of my present incarnation, all the wanton talk and fine phrases, be changed into a hymn of praise that shall glorify the doctrines of the Buddha in age on age to come, and cause the Wheel of Law forever to turn.¹

Po Chu'i could not have imagined the impact his statement would have, two hundred years later, on litterateurs in Japan. His phrase k'uang yen i yu (wild words and fancy phrases),² which was rendered as kyōgen kigo or kyōgen kigyo in Japanese, became a popular catch phrase in the Heian and Kamakura periods, encompassing within it both a censure of creative writing on religious grounds and, paradoxically, a justification of it which was also based on the Buddhist doctrine. The phrase provided one way to articulate and resolve the tension between an engagement with 'words' and a commitment to the ideals of Buddhism. A consensus had gradually emerged among

² The translation 'wild words and fancy phrases' is closer to the original and so I have preferred to use it throughout this work.
Japanese writers that the role and validity of literature in relation to Buddhism had to be clearly defined, and Po Chu'i's statement provided one response to this question.

The need to reconcile the demands of creative writing with religious goals and ideals was felt by all those who were, in one way or another, committed to both; and their number was by no means small. They included those who might be seen first and foremost as litterateurs, as well as by those whose primary commitment was to the propagation of the Buddhist faith. Even while making this distinction between "litterateurs" and "priests", it is important to recognize that there were many writers who occupied a grey area — poet/priests who had been schooled in the literary traditions of their times but who had become priests or recluses in order to pursue 'spiritual' goals. Kamo no Chōmei was one writer who occupied this ambiguous position, and for him, as for many others, the urge to harmonize artistic and religious practices was a powerful one.

There was a wide range of responses in the Heian and Kamakura periods to the problem of affirming literary writing while at the same time taking into account the single most powerful ideological force of the period, Buddhism. Chōmei was not alone in attempting to achieve a synthesis between artistic and religious practices. But the manner in which he attempted to do this was, in some senses, untypical. He did not fall back on well-accepted formulae but sought rather, through the re-working of the concept of suki to bring together these disparate and yet closely interlinked ideals. By surveying some of the more representative writings of the Heian and Kamakura periods which address this question, I hope to provide the necessary context within which Chōmei's own struggle to achieve a synthesis between the 'secular' and 'religious' domains can be located.

The official adoption of the Chinese script in Japan had occurred around the year 405. Writing was used in the fifth and sixth centuries chiefly in order to keep accounts and registers, or send dispatches to foreign courts. The Japanese themselves were not yet in a position to write in Chinese, and the function of writing was assigned to scribes
of Chinese and Korean origin. The mastery of the Chinese language was a long and painful process, and the attempt to represent Japanese words with signs standing for Chinese was far from easy, given the very different nature of the two languages.3

The first extant work written by the Japanese is the Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters) completed in 712. This was followed in 720 by the Nihonshoki (Chronicles of Japan). Both these works were attempts to write national histories, and were clearly inspired by Chinese example. The total dependence on Chinese in the creation of a written culture meant that the Japanese sought a Chinese precedent for their writings. It meant also that they inherited from their cultural mentors a strong Confucian outlook on the function of writing.

It was only by the fourth decade of the ninth century that there was a challenge to the acceptance of the supremacy of Chinese learning in all spheres. The national university that had been set up in the Nara period in emulation of T'ang institutions, which was devoted to Chinese studies, lost some of its political importance with the growth of the power of the Fujiwara aristocracy. Actual contact with the shaky T'ang empire was also on the decline. The Japanese were now moving away from mere emulation of Chinese models, and what emerged was a more complex culture which incorporated native sensibilities and traditions as well as those that had been learnt from the Chinese. An important impetus to this autochthonous growth was the evolution of a syllabary script (kana) for the purposes of writing in Japanese. While official histories, government records, documents, and diaries by courtiers continued to be written in Chinese, the language that carried prestige, men and more particularly women in the Heian court chose to express themselves through poetry written in the native medium.

Increasingly, Japanese poetry took on a more public role. Japanese poetry came to be regarded as a fit medium for officially sanctioned poetry contests and Imperial

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banquets. The monopoly of the *shih* (a Chinese verse form) was challenged and *waka* sought to express through the native idiom the themes and practices sanctioned by the *shih*. The compilation of the fourth imperial anthology, the *Kokinshū* (*Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems*) in 905 was a significant break from the past. For the first time an official anthology of *waka* rather than *shih* had been promoted. This event marked the formal recognition of the fact that *waka* had become the prestigious poetic medium of the Heian court. The new poetry that emerged had at its disposal a syllabary script that allowed for a greater degree of sophistication, and poetic styles that were borrowed more systematically from their Chinese counterparts.

The tenth century also saw the flowering of Japanese prose literature. One of the earliest contributors to this progress was Ki no Tsurayuki, who wrote the preface to the *Kokinshū*. His literary diary, the *Tosa nikki* (*Tosa Diary*) set the pace for many other writings in this genre. The *Kagerō nikki* (*The Gossamer Years*) was one of the finest of the early works in this medium. By the first decade of the eleventh century the flowering of Japanese prose fiction reached its apogee with one of the greatest literary works of Japan, the *Genji Monogatari* (*Tale of Genji*). Thus in the realm of both prose and poetry it could be said that Japanese literature had at last come to its own.

However, this is not to suggest that writers stopped composing poetry or writing prose accounts in Chinese. Rather, there co-existed two streams of writing, one in Japanese and the other in Chinese, both of which were influenced to a remarkable degree by Chinese literary traditions. It was in the Heian period that there emerged, to varying degrees, in both streams of writing, apprehensions about the the function and value of creative writing. This questioning of the role of fiction occurred in conjunction with the growing impact of Buddhism in Heian courtly society and an increasing familiarity with some of the major canonical works of the Buddhist doctrine, such as the Lotus Sutra.

**Literary Responses of Japanese Prose Fiction Writers**

One of the most interesting discussions on the nature of prose fiction — of the grounds on which it might be censured and the ways in which it could be defended —
appears in the *Hotaru* (Fireflies) chapter of the *Tale of Genji*. In a playful discussion with his protegee Tamakatsura, the hero, Prince Genji, finding her immersed in reading romances, first dismisses these tales as outright lies. He then proceeds to qualify this statement by admitting that the lies are so skilfully presented that the reader cannot help but take them for truths. In the end he enters into a more serious exposition on the subject, arguing against his earlier position and making a claim for fiction on grounds that are both Confucian and Buddhist. He says:

They (romances) have set down and preserved happenings from the age of the gods to our own. The *Chronicles of Japan* and the rest are a mere fragment of the whole truth. It is your romances that fill in the details and are in accordance with the principles of public morality. They may not tell us of things that happened to specific people exactly as they happened; nonetheless, there are things that happen in this life, both good and bad, things that one never tires of seeing and hearing about and which one cannot bear to keep shut in one’s heart and not pass down to future generations. This in my view accounts for the reasons why romances first came to be written.

Genji explains that both good and bad things are integrally part of the world, and while there is a difference between the lighter and more serious forms of writing, or between old and contemporary fiction, to dismiss them as lies is itself to depart from the true nature of things. It is at this point that Genji turns to the Buddhist doctrine to further strengthen his case:

Even in the writ that the Buddha drew from his noble heart there are what are known as upaya or expedient means. To the ignorant they may appear to be quite inconsistent and hence not worthy of credence. Particularly in the Mahayana scriptures, there are many instances of the presence of this doctrine. But the general thrust is always the same. The difference between enlightenment and delusion is of the same order as the difference between the good and the bad
in a romance. If one takes a generous view then one can say that nothing no matter whether it is good or bad is empty and worthless.\(^4\)

This passage reveals clearly Murasaki Shikibu's familiarity with reservations about fiction that must have been current at the time. It is to the Confucian argument that she addresses herself first of all. She points out that romances are in significant ways not different from the respectable national histories like the *Kojiki*. They give flesh and blood and spell out at greater length what the chronicles merely sketch. Also they conform to certain accepted principles of morality, and thus help promote virtue. And as they deal with both good and evil, both of which are undeniably present in this world, they are in a sense based on 'fact'.

Murasaki then turns to the Buddhist doctrine itself in order to counter the Confucian inspired accusation that fiction unlike histories amounted to no more than a falsehood. Within the Buddhist sutras too lies (soragoto) were condemned as one of the ten sins of the word. Murasaki draws a parallel between fiction and the notion of hōben or expedient means. She argues that fiction works as an expedient means that helps in grasping the true meaning of the Dharma. The good and bad characters in a novel, she claims, correspond with enlightenment and delusion respectively, and it is only through one that the the true nature of the other can be apprehended. In this way fictional writing is not unlike scriptural writing. Both use expedient means which may appear to stand in contradiction to the Ultimate Truth but are in fact integral to our apprehension of it.

Another interesting claim that Murasaki makes for the impetus to writing is that human beings cannot help but be keen observers of the world around them, and what is more, are driven by an urge to record all that they see and hear. This argument has striking resonances with the preface of the *Kokinshū*, in which Ki no Tsurayuki writes:

The poetry of Japan has its seed in the human heart (kokoro) and flourishes in a myriad leaves of words (koto no ha). Human beings

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are creatures of many experiences, many deeds; and it is in poetry that they give expression to the meditations of the heart in terms of what they see and hear. Hearing the warbler sing among the blossoms, or the frog in his fresh waters, is there any living being not given to song? Effortlessly poetry moves heaven and earth, stirs the feelings of the spirits invisible to the eye, softens relations between men and women and calms the hearts of fierce warriors.  

It is not unlikely that the author of the Tale of Genji drew on the preface of the Kokinshū, with which she must have been familiar, to assert for prose writing what Tsurayuki had claimed for Japanese poetry; namely that the impetus to write about one's own observations and responses to the world was an irrepressible one. It should be pointed out that the case for poetry was always much stronger, because it claimed to be a natural and spontaneous expression of genuine feelings that arose in response to the natural world, as opposed to that inhabited by people.

The appearance of this exposition on the value of fictional writing in the Tale of Genji is significant. It suggests that the issue had already become a subject of some debate among Heian literary circles. At the same time, it would be fair to say that Murasaki Shikibu does not display any serious concern about the validity of romantic fiction, and by extension, of her own work. Prince Genji's lecture on romances cannot be separated from the context in which it appears, namely, the curious relationship he has with the young girl Tamakatsura, who is at once his protegee and a potential victim of his sexual desires. Genji's bantering tone towards the young girl who, he claims, is gullible enough to be taken in by romantic nonsense, as well as his erudite explanation of the validity of romantic fiction, can equally be seen as Murasaki Shikibu's clever use of an ongoing debate to highlight one of the central themes of her novel, namely the complex and intricate patterns of relationship between the two sexes.

The Tale of Genji became the object of deep admiration not long after it was written. A court lady whose name is unknown but who is identified as being Takasue's

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daughter, wrote a diary called the *Sarashina nikki*. She displays a total absorption with the *Tale of Genji* and an obsessive longing for the world that it represents. This is accompanied by a sense of deep guilt about abandoning herself to romances and letting her thoughts be dominated by idle daydreams of lovers in the mould of the Shining Prince, Genji. The author of the work describes how, after reading the *Tale of Genji*, she was visited in a dream by a priest in a yellow surplice who commanded her to learn the fifth book of the Lotus sutra immediately. She speaks with regret about wasting her time reading fiction instead of employing it more fruitfully in the study of the sutras.

What is perhaps most striking about the *Sarashina nikki* is the irreconciliability for the author, of the world of romances that absorbs her and the reality of her own life. She finds in her neglect of Buddhist practice, and her obsession with fiction the explanation of her unhappiness. The anxiety that she experiences about reading fiction is generated more by her personal insecurity and sense of failure than by a well-worked out rejection of fiction on religious grounds. It is significant, nonetheless, that her sense of unease takes the form of *monogatari* versus Buddhist practice — a polarity that many other writers articulated and attempted to resolve more self-consciously in their writings.

The extraordinary flowering of Japanese prose writing in the tenth and eleventh centuries was, for the most part, marked by an absence of any serious misgivings about the validity of such writings in relation to Buddhist injunctions. By the twelfth century, however, several works emerged which attempted to defend or save Murasaki Shikibu, who was believed to be suffering for the sins she had committed by writing the *Tale of Genji*. The *Genji Ippon kyō*, compiled by a monk named Ankyoin Chōken around the

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year 1166, was written in Chinese in the form of a sutra. It was meant to be a prayer offered for the repose of the souls of Murasaki Shikibu and the readers of the *Tale of Genji*, who were suffering in hell for spending their time with frivolous works of fiction. In the historical tale entitled *Ima Kagami* (*Mirror of the Present*) written in 1170, the narrator of the work defended the *Tale of Genji* as a kind of expedient truth and suggested that Murasaki was no ordinary person but the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (Kannon) herself, who had appeared in human form to lead human beings to salvation.

In the realm of Japanese poetry too, there was no attempt, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, to justify or valorize poetry in Buddhist or indeed in Confucian terms. The preface of the *Kokinshū* makes clear the general thrust of this work. As Brower and Miner write:

...the Preface reveals the emergence of a critical consciousness, as distinguished from the earlier birth of literary awareness; it is an attempt to create a theory and prescribe a practice for Japanese poetry that would entitle it once again to social acceptance, this time as an art on a level with Chinese poetry. The effort appears to have entailed an insistence upon an established poetic language with the prestige of tradition, and a channeling individual expression to important but subtle adjustments of the relation between the originality of the individual poet and the conventionality of his prescribed materials.

The two major topics of *Kokinshū* poetry are love and the seasons. Both in the progression of the changing seasons, and the the pattern of love affairs — the first glimpses of the beloved, the consummation of the affair, its final dissolution and the sadness that follows — the underlying theme is the fundamental transience of worldly existence. But this perception of evanescence, even while it may have been informed by

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7 Genji monogatari jō, Abe Akio, Oka Kazuo and Yamagishi Tokuei, eds; Kokugo kokubungaku kenkyūshi taisei 3, Tokyo: Sanseido, 1960, pp 37 and 421.


the Buddhist view of the world, does not lead to poetry that deals directly with the Buddhist doctrine. Unlike later poetic anthologies, the *Kokinshū* does not have a separate category of poems devoted to Buddhist themes. Likewise, the collection lacks a Confucian sense of social responsibility, and therefore does not seek to redress injustices by being the moral voice of its society.

Japanese prose fiction, as well as poetry, for the most part did not feel the need to question the act of creative writing. It is as if, having for the first time found a way of expressing ideas and feelings in a native idiom, writers abandoned themselves in an unself-conscious manner to the delights of self-expression. The use of the term *kyōgen kigo*, and the expression of the notion that literary writings were sinful, came from scholars of Chinese in the Heian period. These scholars had a greater familiarity with Chinese Confucian texts and classical Chinese poetry. It is not surprising, then, that the first serious doubts about the value of literature arose among members of this group.

**The Response of Writers of Chinese Prose and Poetry to Literature**

It is worthwhile noting how this influence came to be felt in Japanese literary circles. Undoubtedly the single most influential Chinese poet in Japanese literary circles in the Heian period was Po Chu'i whom we have already quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Po Chu'i himself notes that during his life-time his collected works made their way to Japan. It is not clear exactly when his poetry first appeared in Japan, but on the very date that Po Chu'i appended a note to the end of his *Collected Works* (the first day of the fifth month of 845), the Japanese pilgrim Jikaku, fleeing from China disguised as a layman, is said to have had with him a copy of Po's Collected Works in his luggage. For centuries to come Po's writings were referred to simply as 'The Collection' in Japan — an indication of the uncontested status of this literary figure in that country.10 The

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10 Murasaki Shikibu, in her diary, mentions that she would secretly read the two books of Ballads with her Majesty. The Ballads she refers to are contained in chapters three and four of Po's Collected Works as they have been preserved today. See Waley, A. *Life and Times of Po Chu'i*, pp.212-13.
fortuitous circumstances that led to Po Chu'i's works appearing in Japan established him as the undisputed literary authority from China, one who was emulated by litterateurs of the Heian court. The other great eighth century poets of China were hardly known in Japan — Li Po's works receive mention at the end of the ninth century but he was known only among a restricted circle of scholars. Tu Fu remained unknown probably until the fourteenth century.

Po Chu'i's own attitudes to the role and validity of literature were shaped by traditional Confucian principles. In a letter to his close friend Yuan Chen, in 815, Po discusses the "main principles of poetry" and his own "literary intentions". As Arthur Waley points out, Po does not say anything particularly original in his letter, neither is it his intention to do so. He merely restates a position which had become part of the orthodoxy of the Chinese literary tradition. Po Chu'i reserves the highest praise for poetry that carries a moral or political meaning — poetry that is not an end in itself, but rather a means to order the state by instructing it in the art of good government. For Po the Book of Poems (the first anthology of Chinese poetry, dated 778 B.C.) stands at the pinnacle of this ideal. The songs, he claims, expressed directly or allegorically the grievances of the people, and could be used by the rulers of China to redress injustices. Po laments the subsequent decadence in poetry. He sees the sixth century as the period when poetry lost all social relevance and became entirely an individual sport aimed at clever verbal contrivances. As he puts it, poetry became mere "sporting with wind and snow, toying with grasses and flowers".

Turning to his own work, Po speaks of his growing commitment to writing poetry with a political message, a commitment which developed when he received a post at court. He sums up his views on writing thus, "It was then that I reached this conclusion: the duty of literature is to be of service to the writer's generation; that of poetry to influence public affairs." Ironically, however, it was not Po Chu'i's political

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11 The following discussion on Po's views on literature is based on the information provided in Waley's Life and Times of Po Chu'i, pp 107-13.
poetry that received the highest praise from his contemporaries. Po complains about this in his letter to Yuan Chen. He explains the four categories into which he divides his own poetry: first, the didactic poems with a social and political purpose; secondly, the meditative poems written to express personal moods and feelings; then the "poems of sorrow" which include elegies on the death of friends and laments on misfortune; and fourth, the "miscellaneous poems", written simply to express some fancy of the moment or to "enhance the pleasure of meetings and dissipate the gloom of farewells". Po laments the fact that it was only his poems in the last category that had received popularity. Po tells the story of a singing-girl who put up her price on the ground that she could sing one of his poems entitled 'Everlasting Remorse'. This poem too belongs to the last category which, according to Po, had poems that he did not value at all and which he would be quite happy to see left out of his collection, if some future editor wished to do so. In Japan there was even less interest in his political poetry, and the poem "Everlasting Remorse", for instance, was as popular with the Japanese literati as it had been among the singing-girl and her patrons in Po's times.

It is presumably to apologize for his "miscellaneous" and "meditative" poems that Po Chu'i employs the term ku'ang yen i yu (kyogen kigo.). This term itself, however, does not have its roots in Confucian literary criticism. For Po Chu'i no justification of his poems with a political and social purpose was necessary since these conformed to Confucian notions of morality. The origins of this phrase are to be found elsewhere, namely in Buddhist scriptural writing.

Po Chu'i was representative of many Chinese poets of the time, who were good Confucians in their public life but who in their private world were drawn to Taoist and Buddhist practices. Po appears to have shown considerable interest in Buddhist philosophy from his youth, but it was only in his later years that he seems to have become more involved with following the Buddhist faith. This is reflected in the poetry he has left behind. He addressed several of his poems to Buddhist monks, and, as we mentioned earlier, dedicated his works to Buddhist monasteries. Both his belief that
poetry could serve religious ends as well as his doubts about the value of poetry are recurring themes in his own writing. We know that he studied the *Avatamsaka sutra* with the monk Tao tsung. In a piece devoted to this monk, Po wrote that the Buddha uttered hymns of praise and the bodhisattvas wrote religious treatises, but Tao tsung wrote poetry because he considered it an effective means of communicating with the literati and converting to Buddhism. This was also what motivated Po to offer a collection of his own literary works to monasteries.

In a poem written as early as 817 he writes:

*Ever since I practiced assiduously the method leading to the Gateway of the Void, I have dispelled the various kinds of mental perturbation up to now. Only the demon of poetry is not conquered. Whenever the gay moment arises, I take pleasure to chant.*

In 841 he expressed the same concern again in a poem that he sent to some monks and which he requested to have inscribed on the walls of his cottage in Lu shan:

*He that thirty years ago was master of this cottage, though today he is still in the world, his hair is white as silk...He has gradually vanquished the Demon of Wine and does not get wildly drunk; but the Karma of Words still remains; he has not abandoned verse.*

Po Chu'i is credited with having coined the phrase *k'uang yen i yu*. The two terms had been used separately in China but no one before Po had used them in conjunction with each other. *K'uang yen* was a term used by Chinese writers at least as early as the Chuang Tzu\(^\text{13}\) to describe any sort of nonsensical, irrational or trivial talk. *I yu* was one of the four sins of the word to be found in the list of ten evils (*jūaku*) proscribed by Buddhists. In the *Sukhavati sutra* (Array of the Happy Land sutra) for example, we find the injunction against *i yu* (ornate phrases), listed as one of the four

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sins of the word, the others being falsehood, equivocation and slander. The *Avatamsaka sutra* (The Flower Wreath sutra) describes how a person who committed any of these sins would be sentenced to hell, to rebirth as an animal, or to life in the world of the hungry ghosts.

However, as Yamada Shozen demonstrates, Po Chu'i used the two terms together without any serious intention, merely as a rhetorical device in which the phrase *k'uang yen* reinforced the idea already embodied in the term *i yu*. Yamada examines the prayers that Po appended to his collection of literary works which he dedicated to three Buddhist temples in China. The first was to the Tung Lin monastery in Lu shan in the year 835. On this occasion Po attached the plea that we quoted at the beginning of the chapter: "May the worldly writings of my present incarnation, all the frivolous words (*kuang yen, kyōgen*) and specious phrases (*i yu, kigo*) be changed into a hymn of praise that shall glorify the doctrine of the Buddha in age on age to come and cause the Wheel of the Law forever to turn." However instead of *kuang yen* (*kyōgen*), he used the term *fang yen* (*hōgen*) which could be translated as 'irresponsible or thoughtless speech'. The following year he dedicated another copy of his collected works to the Sheng shan monastery in Lo-yang. This time he did not use the words *kuang yen* or *i yu* or but merely expressed his desire that his worldly writings would be changed into a hymn of praise, glorifying the Buddha's doctrine. For Po Chu'i the omission of the phrase is not a matter of consequence because the phrase only restates the notion of "worldly writings". It was in the last presentation of his works to the Shiang shan monastery at Soochow in 839 that he used the phrase *kuang yen i yu*.

Po's writings reveal not only a Confucian concern about the political and social relevance of poetry, but also a more metaphysical questioning of the relationship of worldly involvements such as poetry and the pursuit of the Buddhist Path. It is unlikely that he used the phrase 'wild words and fancy phrases' to express his most refined and...
well-worked out position on this question. In Japan however, the phrase acquired a significance far beyond that intended by Po when he used it. The undisputed prestige that Po and his works carried in Japanese literary circles meant that his formulation was taken by many as the authoritative answer to the problem of defining the role of poetry within a Buddhist framework.

The Use of the Term Kyōgen Kigo in Chinese Writing in Japan

The first extant use of the term kyōgen kigo appears in Minamoto Tamenori’s collection of tales called the Sambōekotoba. According to the preface of the book it was written in 984 for the edification of Princess Takako, the second daughter of Emperor Reizei. She became the consort of Emperor En'yū, but had to take the tonsure in 982. She died three years later in 985 aged just under twenty. Tamenori’s work was intended to teach this noblewoman the essentials of the three Buddhist treasures, namely, the Buddha, the Dharma and the priesthood. It was originally accompanied by illustrations, but the work in its many recensions survives today without its pictures. In one section of the work there is a description of what is for us a significant event — the first occasion on which a meeting between scholars of Chinese and members of the Tendai priesthood was organized.15 This meeting was known as the kangakue (Service for the Advancement of Learning).

Tamenori describes how during the reign of the Emperor Murakami, in the year 964, some students of the University devoted to Chinese learning expressed a desire to establish a bond with the Tendai monks of Mount Hiei, and to hold a joint meeting. The purpose of the meeting, they said, was to promote and encourage mutual exchange between the Way of the Dharma (nori no michi) and the Way of Chinese Learning (mon no michi). On the evening preceding the appointed day of the meeting, the monks descended from the heights of Mount Hiei while those who belonged to the secular

world (zoku) climbed up from Sakamoto. The scholars of Chinese sang aloud a verse by the poet Po Chu'i as they made their way up. When they reached the top they were met by the Tendai priests who intoned aloud a verse from the Lotus sutra. On the following morning they began the kangakue with lectures on the Lotus sutra; in the evening they chanted the nembutsu, and this was followed by spending the whole night singing verses in praise of the Buddha and the Dharma. These poems were then presented to the temple in the manner of Po Chu'i’s own dedication, and his plea, that his worldly writings, the wild words and fancy phrases that constituted his poetry be turned into a hymn of praise, was recited by those who took part in the kangakue. The monks also recited various stanzas from the Lotus sutra through the night. Tamenori concludes by noting that listening to the monks reciting the wondrous stanzas from the sutras and the laymen poets reciting Chinese poetry, everyone present was deeply moved and shed tears.

There are several features of the kangakue that are worthy of note. First that the initiative for such a gathering came from scholars who belonged to the prestigious national university, which specialized in Chinese history, classics and poetry. The fact that these scholars wished to come out of their well-established and learned Confucian institution, interact with the Buddhist clergy and create a situation in which the mutual appreciation of poetry and Buddhism could be possible is a remarkable index of the ascendancy of Buddhist values and ideals in that society. The conception of such a gathering was inspired by a similar ceremony that took place at the Confucian university. This ceremony took place twice a year and was dedicated to the worship of Confucius and his ten disciples. On the night before the ceremony lectures would be held on the Confucian classics and offerings made to Confucius which would be distributed on the following day among those attending the ceremony. This was followed by the composition and recitation of Chinese poetry. In the kangakue ceremony the lectures on the Lotus sutra were substituted for lectures on the Confucian classics.
More significantly however, such a gathering entailed a major shift in the content of poetry. Only poetry that addressed itself directly to Buddhist concerns, poetry that could be harnessed to the Buddhist cause, could become part of what was essentially a Buddhist enterprise. It is to the activities of the kangakue that we can trace the beginnings of a new category of poems based on phrases from the twenty eight chapters of the Lotus sutra. These poems, which came to be known as the nijūhappōnka (poems on the twenty eight chapters of the Lotus sutra), became an important part of the poetic tradition of waka.

The initiative for these meetings, as mentioned earlier, came from the side of the scholars of Chinese. The Tendai monks would not have needed to gain the support of these scholars — such was the security of the 'spiritual' realm which they inhabited. The scholars on the other hand, by undertaking the ascent from Sakamoto to the mountain temples to meet the monks, attempted to bridge the gap between their worldly existence (zoku) and the spiritual world of Buddhism. It was in this context that Po Chu'i's phrase kyōgen kigo acquired a special significance. The presence of poetry as an important part of Buddhist practice had to be explained and justified, and to do this the scholars of Chinese clearly found a convenient precedent in Po's own apologia.

Among the scholars who took part in the kangakue were Yoshishige Yasutane, Ōe no Igen, Takashina Sekizen, Ki no Tadana, Tachibana Kihei, Minamoto Tamenori, the author of the Sambōekotoba and so on. That many members of the kangakue acknowledged that the content and purpose of their poetry had to change, and felt strongly committed to effecting such change can be best seen in the writings of one of its key members, Yoshishige Yasutane.

Yasutane was the son of Kamo no Tadayuki, and belonged to a family of ying yang scholars. He showed a deep interest in Chinese learning from an early age, becoming a pupil of Sugawara Buntoki, with whom he learnt Chinese poetry. Yasutane's early compositions show his mastery of Chinese techniques of versifying. In this period he abandoned himself to the pleasures of poetry, and nowhere in his
writings does he refer to his poetic compositions as wild words and fancy phrases. It was Yasutane's growing interest in Tendai Buddhism, and particularly the Jōdo teachings within it, that led him to initiate the kangakue. The subsequent deepening of Yasutane's religious commitment brought about an important change in his literary activity. He wished to establish a place for poetry as an important practice that needed to be included in a religious ceremony. Not only did he introduce the practice of composing and reciting poetry at the kangakue, he also urged that in other forums in which lectures on the Lotus sutra took place such as the gokurakue, and the kyōkae, poetry praising the Buddha be composed.16

Yasutane sought to establish the legitimacy of poetry as a religious practice, and by the same token he dismissed poetry which had as its sole motive the spirit of diversion, employing frivolous words and ornamented phrases as rhetorical devices used for their own sake. In one of his poetic compositions he speaks about the poetic conceits used by poets, who in their verses are given to likening the cherry blossoms to the snow and the crysanthemums to gold. For these poets, he argues, there is no escape from the sin of using false words (mogo) and fancy or ornamented speech (kigo). Deluded beings often cannot help feeling inclined to such activities, but equally they are in secret fear of the retribution they will receive for these sins. For this reason, he claims, he has given up literary pursuits and turned instead to praying to the Buddha.17

However, as Yasutane's works such as the Chiteiki (Account of the Pond Pavilion) indicate, Yasutane continued to enjoy the pleasures of poetry in his private life in much the same way as Confucian bureaucrats like Po Chu'i enjoyed the more Taoist pleasures of wine, women, music and poetry in their personal world, away from their official duties. In the case of Yasutane this kind of dual existence ultimately proved unsatisfactory to him, for in the year 987 he took the tonsure and became a disciple of

16 Yamada Shozen, "Kyōgen kigo no ni sokumen: Yoshishige Yasutane no shi kan no hensen to Tendai kyōgaku to no renkan", Buzangaku, No. 5, March 1969.

the Tendai master Genshin. There is no evidence of his engaging in poetic activities after his joining the priesthood. Yamada Shozen believes that it can be assumed that, like Genshin and other believers of Jōdo Buddhism, Yasutane adopted an increasingly severe attitude to the composition of poetry. The Jōdo sect of Tendai Buddhism best represented the view that literature had no intrinsic value, but that it could on occasion be used as an expedient means. It is perhaps for this reason that the phrase kyōgen kigo was first taken up in Japan by those who were most influenced by Jōdo teachings.\(^\text{18}\)

The phrase kyōgen kigo, together with the context in which Po Chu"i used it, became popular among a larger section of the court aristocracy, not through the Chinese writings of the members of the kangakue, but rather through a song (roei) which was included in the Wakanrōeishū (Collection of Poetic Recitations in Chinese and Japanese) compiled by Fujiwara Kintō in the eleventh century. Po Chu'i's plea was rendered into the following song in this work:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Negawaku wa kongyō sezoku no monji no go} \\
\text{Kyōgen kigyō no ayamari o mote} \\
\text{Kaeshite torai se ze sanbutsujō no in} \\
\text{Tenbōrin no en to semu.}
\end{align*}
\]

I wish that the karma of secular writings
Which I compose in this life,
The errors of wild words and fancy phrases,
Be changed into a means to praise the Buddhist Vehicle
In age on age to come,
And the condition for turning the Wheel of the Law.\(^\text{19}\)

Yamada offers evidence to suggest that Fujiwara Kintō also took part in the kangakue, and that he composed poems based on the Lotus sutra. This explains the

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inclusion of Po Chu'i's statement, in the form of a song, in the collection he compiled. Writers of Chinese prose and poetry in the Heian period then, were the first to address the problem of situating literary endeavours in a Buddhist context, and they found in Po Chu'i's statement a way of articulating both the dilemma and its possible solution.

**Japanese Poetry and the Development of the Ideal of Michi**

By the twelfth century, two traditions which I have for the purposes of convenience schematized as "literary" and "Buddhist", came to be firmly established. The composition of *waka* in particular became the most highly revered form of literary activity, and one which was pursued with a single-minded dedication. At the same time, Buddhist ideals came to have a deeper meaning for the aristocracy, who now engaged more seriously than ever before in following Buddhist practices. Two rather contradictory trends emerged. What had been perceived by the scholars of Chinese who initiated the *kangakue* as two distinct traditions which had to be brought together consciously, became even more independent in part because of the special place of *waka* in the lives of the aristocracy. At the same time, the growing interpenetration of these two traditions resulted in the emergence of many more poets who saw Buddhism as being integral to their poetic practice, as well as priests who sought to include poetry among the prescribed religious practices. The increased importance of these two realms and their interaction with one another threw up new formulations as to the exact nature of the place of poetry in the life of a Buddhist. While *kyōgen kigo* continued to be one important if rather formulaic response to this question, new assertions emerged which stressed the identity of poetry and the scriptural writings.

Before turning specifically to the new response of poets and priests alike in this new age, it is important to consider the factors that contributed to the development of Japanese poetry as the artistic practice par excellence, and the reasons why it could make claims to being not only on a par with but, at times, even identical with Buddhist writings. The emergence of the ideal of *michi* (the Way) in the twelfth century was fundamental in shaping new perceptions about the connections between poetry and
Buddhism. Konishi Jin'ichi's fine study of this ideal has already covered this ground, and here I shall do no more than summarize his study of this important concept.20

Konishi identifies five major elements that are integral to the formation of the ideal of *michi*: specialization, transmission, a conforming ethic, universality and authority. The word *michi* originally signified profession or expertise in a particular area of activity. *Michi no hito*, or people who followed the Way of a particular discipline, were those who had undergone specialized training in that field. However, expertise and specialization alone did not constitute the new ideal of *michi*. The practices and cumulative knowledge of a particular discipline had to be transmitted from master to disciple. The emergence of different schools (*ie*) ensured that the closely guarded secret teachings could be transmitted from generation to generation. The special emphasis on secret, orally transmitted teachings was a reflection of the high value placed on precedent, and on the need to pass down knowledge exactly as it had been received in the past. The presence of a strong conformist ethic was integral to the development of the ideal of *michi*.

Perhaps the single most important feature that contributed to the formation of this new ideal was the belief that total dedication to a particular pursuit would lead to the intuitive understanding of a universal truth. This was true as much of the most trivial and insignificant pursuits as it was of the more respected disciplines. Konishi cites an example from the fourteenth century literary piece, the *Tsurezuregusa* (Essays in Idleness), in which its author Yoshida Kenkō notes that a person who has mastered the art of tree climbing (*kinobori no michi*) experiences a truth identical to that reached by masters in artistic spheres. This feature of a truth shared by all *michi* is what Konishi calls universality.


Historically, the first step in the development of *michi* was the social recognition of professional occupations as worthwhile pursuits. The first area of specialization that acquired this status was *kangaku* or Chinese scholarship. The Japanese Court University established on the T'ang model specialized in various aspects of Chinese learning such as Confucianism, law, history, the liberal arts and mathematics. Families such as the Sugawara, Kiyowara and Ōe became the purveyors of knowledge in particular areas of *kangaku*, possessing the authority to transmit this knowledge to chosen disciples who were under their tutelage.

*Waka* was the next area of specialization that followed *kangaku* in being recognized as an important discipline. The compilation of the *Kokinshū* in the Heian period marked the formal recognition of Japanese poetry as a highly valued artistic pursuit. But for all that, *waka* did not become a *michi* in this period. Even while Japanese poetry gained a new respectability and prestige, the high aristocracy still looked on poets such as Ki no Tsurayuki as little more than *waka* artisans who could be commissioned to produce poems for the decoration of folding screens, and who were therefore expected to comply with the demands of their patrons. It was in the twelfth century that the situation began to change, as poets such as Minamoto Shunrai and Fujiwara Mototoshi, neither of whom held high rank, became leading figures in *waka* circles and were invited to poetry gatherings held by high-ranking aristocrats, who themselves began to take a much more active part in the composition of poetry. By the end of the twelfth century *waka* schools came to be established. The Rokujō branch of the Fujiwara was shaped into a school of *waka* by Fujiwara Akisuke (1090-1155) and his sons Kiyosuke (1104-1177), Shigeie (1161-1207) and Suetsune (1131-1221). Fujiwara Shunzei (1114-1204), who became a pupil of Fujiwara Mototoshi, formed the Mikohidari school, which became the most prestigious of all *waka* schools.

At the same time many other arts, much less prestigious than Japanese poetry, such as music, court football, military arts, horse-riding, painting and so on, were in the
process of being elevated from being mere pastimes to serious vocations, *michi*, for which its practitioners would gladly lay down their lives.

Above all, it was the belief that even trivial pursuits, if practised earnestly, could lead to a truth of the same order as that which could be found in the pursuit of more prestigious vocations, that transformed artistic practices such as poetry into *michi*. This universal essence or truth that could be penetrated through the dedicated pursuit of any discipline no matter how insignificant, was seen as being none other than the Truth inherent in the Buddhist Dharma — an indication of the profound influence of Tendai Buddhism on the way in which the ideal of *michi* came to be formulated.

**Tendai Buddhist Doctrine and the Ideal of *Michi***

The Tendai school sets forth the notion of the threefold truth, namely the truth of void (*kō*), the truth of temporariness (*kē*), and the truth of mean (*kōhō*). These three truths penetrate one another and are found perfectly harmonized and united together. "A thing is void but is also temporarily existent. It is temporary because it is void, and the fact that everything is void and at the same time temporary is the middle truth."21 That is to say, all elements or dharmas have only a nominal existence. They come into being through chance causal combinations but are ever changing. They do not have a permanent existence, but can be granted a temporary existence. The true state of things can be seen only through phenomena which are always in a state of flux. The phenomena themselves are identical with the true state of things. This leads to the formulation that the world of phenomena and the world of enlightenment are identical (*shōji soku nehan*). Once the Absolute and the phenomenal are not treated as separate entities and we accept that the Absolute is never totally transcendent from the present world, then we come to the position that the phenomenal world (*samsara, shōji*) and the world of enlightenment (*nirvana, nehan*) are essentially one. There is no difference in

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locus between the world of ignorance and enlightenment. This is the basis of the Buddhist maxim that found popular expression in Japan in the phrase bonnô soku bodai (ignorance is identical with enlightenment).

The position that all dharmas are interdependent and permeate one another, thus resulting in the ultimate unity of the whole universe was the basis of the Tendai doctrine of the Ten Worlds Concomitant (Jikkai gogu). Each of the ten worlds was seen as having an independent existence: an inhabitant of the human world, for example, might be reborn after death in the world of hell or the world of celestial beings, depending on his past karma. Thus the human world was separate from the other nine worlds. But while recognizing the mutual exclusivity of the ten worlds, Tendai teaching also conceived of each world as simultaneously containing within itself all other nine worlds. Thus one world was the ten worlds and the ten worlds were the hundred worlds. Another extension of this logic was the doctrine of enodonkai, the Perfect and Immediate precept which was first advanced by Saichô, the founder of Tendai Buddhism in Japan. He argued that if one fulfills one precept then all the rest will be contained in it. This of course is a radical departure from Hinayana Buddhist practice which demands that all the precepts set out for the priests, two hundred and fifty for monks and three hundred and fortyeight for nuns, be strictly observed. Mahayana Buddhism also requires that all the major precepts be observed. If the logic of Saichô's formulation — if one fulfills one single precept perfectly, all the rest of the precepts will be contained within it — is extended further, then, even songs and poems that emanate from secular activity share certain features with the Buddha's teachings. It is possible then to claim that by penetrating the innermost meaning of an art, one would encompass within that art the innermost meaning of all other paths (michi), even that of the Way of the Buddha (hotoke no michi).

22 The Ten Worlds refers to the worlds of hell, the realm of hungry ghosts, of animals, of asuras, of humans, of celestial beings, of Arhats, of the Self-Enlightened, of the bodhisattvas, and of the Buddhas.
It was Japanese poetry that emerged above every other artistic practice as the most prestigious of all michi, and one that was cultivated by the aristocracy of the Kamakura period with total commitment. The pursuit of poetry as a serious vocation was a major departure from the role that poetry had played in the lives of the Heian courtiers. Japanese poetry had been an elegant and refined pastime, particularly cultivated as a means of communication between lovers. As Konishi has pointed out, the aesthetic ideal that best exemplified the lives of the aristocracy in the Heian period was furyū.23 The term itself comes from the Chinese feng liu which scholars have tried to define. But in concentrating on the purely lexical meaning of the term they have often failed to grasp the cultural world in which it took root. Konishi has found it more fruitful to examine the poetry of the Tang period with particular reference to the technique of parallelism to understand the context in which feng liu was used. He suggests that four terms — liquor, poetry, woman and zithern were consistently equated with feng liu. The ideal was essentially a hedonistic one of Taoist origins, one which placed great emphasis on the enjoyment of amorous pursuits, drinking liquor, composing poetry and playing music. However this hedonism was tempered by a meticulous attention to rules of taste. In Japan the term first came to be used in the poetry of the Manyōshū and was frequently rendered by the Japanese word miyabi, which means essentially 'of the court' or 'courtlike', as opposed to hinabi or inakabi meaning 'boorish' or 'rustic'. This suggests that already by the Nara period the term furyū was associated with the qualities that marked courtly life, namely refinement, the art of love, poetry, music and other artistic pursuits. By the Heian period, this ideal came to be embodied in the character and activities of the hero of The Tale of Genji.

From this brief account we can see that the serious cultivation of Japanese poetry as a vocation in the Kamakura period was a radical departure from the pursuit of poetry

as an *asobi* or refined sport, which had marked the poetic activities of an earlier age. Poetry as pleasure was in some ways the antithesis of poetry as *michi*. The transformation of Japanese poetry from a refined pastime to a serious vocation had a great deal to do with a more serious engagement with Buddhism by the court aristocracy in the twelfth century.

It also had a great deal to do with major political and social changes in the twelfth century that deeply affected the position of the courtiers, forcing them to define their own cultural world in radically new ways. The tenth and eleventh centuries in Japan saw the development of a form of government in which full sovereign power rested on a virtually hereditary basis, devolving on members of one clan, the Fujiwara. The Fujiwara came to acquire enormous power by controlling the Imperial family through a complex system of marriage alliances, by getting themselves appointed as Regents to Emperors and through their acquisition of important manorial estates which brought them great wealth. It was in the period of the Fujiwara Regents that there emerged a court culture which was governed by refinement and the rule of taste. As pointed out earlier, the aesthetic ideal that dominated the lives of noblemen and women was *fūryū*, courtly grace and elegance cultivated through the pursuit of amorous affairs and the composition and recitation of poetry and music. The Heian court was marked by a degree of insularity and self-confidence absent in earlier times. Political stability over a period of two hundred years created the conditions for the cultural hegemony of the Heian aristocracy.

In the late eleventh century certain elements of the ruling class reacted against the exclusive power wielded by the Fujiwara family, a reaction which led to a system of rule by the retired Emperor (*insei*). The retired Emperors ostensibly left political life by taking the tonsure, but in actual fact worked towards the creation of a separate power

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structure in which an abdicated Emperor held a power parallel to that of the reigning Emperor and the Fujiwara government. This kind of two-tier system was of course fraught with problems, and its existence meant considerable tensions. The conflict came to a head when the retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa, pretending to act as guardian to the Emperor, attempted a coup d'état which resulted in a series of civil wars — the Hōgen and Heiji insurrections. For the first time the aristocracy had been forced to turn to the provincial warrior classes to help it consolidate its own position. This resulted in a shift in the locus of power, a shift which was reflected in the appointment of the warrior Kiyomori of the Taira family to the post of Regent, a post which had formerly been the monopoly of the Fujiwara clan. Some years later the Gempei wars took place between the Taira clan and a contending warrior clan, the Minamoto. The Taira family met with a decisive defeat at the battle of Dannoura in 1185. The displacement of the aristocracy had been effected and now it was the provincial warrior groups rather than the Kyoto aristocrats who contended with each other for power. The Minamoto succeeded in establishing a regime of military dictatorship in Kamakura, the Kamakura bakufu.

However, the nobility was not totally supplanted by the new military government. The leader of the bakufu government, Minamoto Yoritomo, continued to acknowledge the authority of the Emperor by giving him the power to confirm his position and rights. Thus it was the court that gave Yoritomo his title of shōgun. The relationship between Kyoto and Kamakura in the thirteenth century was one of mutual dependence, in which the aristocracy sought to take maximum advantage of the Kamakura bakufu's reliance on the court for the maintenance of its authority and prestige. The central concern of the absentee, land-owning nobility was with securing, through the influence of those in power, the revenues from their manorial estates. However as more and more land came to be passed on to the provincial gentry, the middle and lower ranking courtiers (zuryō) lost control of their estates, and many of them were left with only their salaries to support them. This change in their economic status brought with it a decline in the opulent and elegant life-style cultivated by the Heian aristocracy. The ideal of furyū
could not be maintained without financial power. Throughout the Kamakura period the court made several attempts to overthrow bakufu rule. The repeated failure of these attempts demonstrated the political and economic weakness of an aristocracy that had been overtaken by new forces in society.

It was in this new context that a nobility which had previously combined social and political power with refined, aesthetic 'pursuits' began to grow more sharply aware and self-conscious of 'its' culture, and sought to consciously carve out for itself an exclusive domain in the areas of scholarship, literature and the arts in general. The defence of their culture proved to be one effective way in which the aristocrats maintained their superiority over the emergent warrior clans who had divested them of real power. It was this new awareness of their domain of power, namely, culture which contributed to the emergence of the ideal of michi in the Kamakura period. Artistic practices were cultivated with the utmost seriousness; rules of precedent came to be clearly cited and learnt, and knowledge of a particular practice could only be passed down from teacher to pupil. A particular michi thus became the monopoly of the chosen few. The provincial warriors, for their part, acknowledged the cultural superiority of the Kyoto court, and began to follow the aristocratic lead in matters of taste and fashion. The shogun Minamoto Sanetomo, for example, was an avid student of poetry and studied it under the tutelage of the court poet Fujiwara Teika.25

The development of the ideal of michi and the new seriousness with which poetry and other artistic practices came to be pursued had important consequences for the ways in which Buddhist priests and practitioners of waka interpreted literary activity and related it to the practice of Buddhism. The writings of this period reflect both the new seriousness with which artistic practices were taken, as well as the development of a more elaborate defence of these practices on religious grounds.

Prose Fiction and the Notion of Expedient Means in the Kamakura Period

The three major genres which dominated prose fiction in the late Heian and Kamakura periods were the *rekishi monogatari* or historical tales, the romances in the style of the *Tale of Genji* and collections of legends and tales known as *setsuwa*. The most representative of the early historical tales were the *Eiga monogatari* (*Tales of Splendour*), written during the eleventh century, and the *Okagami* (*The Great Mirror*), written over the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Both these works focus on the life of Fujiwara Michinaga, and can be seen as eulogies to the power and splendour of the Heian court. The most important of all the *gunki monogatari* was the *Heike monogatari* (*Tales of the Heike*, ca. 1184-1220), which recounted the struggle between the Minamoto and the Taira clans and the defeat of the Taira at the battle of Dannoura. The *Heike monogatari* is at one level a profoundly Buddhist work as is evidenced by its concern to demonstrate the ultimate ephemerality of human endeavour and power. There are two interesting instances of the use of the term *kyōgen kigo* in this work. In one episode Kumagai Naozane, a Genji warrior, is forced to decapitate Atsumori, a young boy of no more than sixteen years of age who belongs to the Taira camp. After Naozane reluctantly performs this cruel act he discovers Atsumori's flute, and realizes that the music of the flute that he had listened to appreciatively at dawn had been played by the lad that he has just killed. The sight of the flute and the memory of the music lead Kumagai to take the tonsure and to renounce life as a warrior. It is at this juncture that the text alludes to Po Chu'i's statement regarding 'wild words and ornate phrases':

"Kyōgen kigo no kotowari to iinagara, tsui ni sanbutsujō no in to naru koso aware nare." It is indeed moving that
The principle of wild words
And ornate phrases
Finally becomes the cause
For praising the Buddhist Vehicle.26

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In this instance music rather than literature is recognized as being equivalent to the pursuit of frivolous words, but at the same time praised as an expedient means that leads Naozane to abandon worldly life and become a monk. The writer of the *Heike monogatari* is aware of the view that music, poetry and other forms of literary writing constituted a problem but that they could be acceptable if they served a Buddhist cause. However this does not lead to a critique or defence of the work itself. Perhaps because *rekishi monogatari* were not regarded as fiction but rather as literary representations of 'facts', they did not need to formulate a sustained justification of literary writing.

Romances in the mode of the *Tale of Genji* continued to flourish in the late Heian and Kamakura periods. Of the large number of works that were written at this time not many have survived to the present day. For the most part, the authors of these tales are absorbed with the emotional world of lovers and the complications that result from their romantic escapades. Occasional anxiety about immersion in frivolous pursuits notwithstanding, there is a total absence of any theorizing on the role and validity of their craft.

It is significant that prose fiction never came to be elevated to a *michi*. Unlike poetry, which claimed to be the natural and authentic expression of human feeling, romance fiction in particular had much greater difficulty in defending itself against the accusation that it was based on lies. Paradoxically, the cultivation of *waka* as a *michi* meant that it became worthy of pursuit in and of itself, while at the same time demanding a more comprehensive justification of itself in relation to the highest spiritual ideals of the day, represented by Buddhism. The relatively marginal position held by prose fiction may account for the absence of any sustained attempt to make it acceptable in Buddhist terms.

There was however one area of prose writing, the collections of tales, (*setsuwa*) which was more didactic than any other form of prose writing. By the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries there emerged a wide range of tale collections. Among these were the Buddhist *setsuwa* which were clearly Buddhist in intent and sought to preach the
Buddha's Dharma to ordinary people through day to day occurrences. The tales were based on past legends and tales from India, China and Japan, as well as on more contemporary events. *Setsuwa* collections are believed to have been compiled by literati monks from one of the great Buddhist temples as source materials for sermons to be read out aloud to popular audiences. While drawing freely on stories from the scriptures and classical literature, the compilers had to keep in mind an audience that did not belong to the aristocratic elite of the court. What resulted was the presentation of a much more comprehensive world, one including courtiers, provincial warriors, monks and peasants, in which religious morality often gives way to the more worldly virtues of good sense, fortitude and cunning. This tradition that had come into its own in the Heian period with collections such as the *Konjaku monogatari* (*Tales of the Past and the Present*) and the *Uji shūi monogatari* (*Tales of Uji*). The *Shaseki shū* (*Collection of Sand and Pebbles*), which I shall refer to again presently, is a representative example of this tradition.

There were other collections of tales such as the *Jikkinshō* (*A Miscellany of Ten Teachings*) which sought to promote the values and ideals of courtly life or of poetic practice through exemplary tales of courtiers and poets. Yet others like the *Senjūshō* (*A Collection of a Selection of Tales*) and the *Hosshinshū* (*A Collection of Tales of Religious Awakening*) valorized the lives of ascetics and recluses who led individual and sometimes eccentric lives in order to pursue the Buddhist Path, and who made poetry and music an important part of their Buddhist practices. Notwithstanding the individual features of these works, many of them shared a concern to provide some justification for their existence. Two features that emerge in the prefaces of many *setsuwa* collections are the claim that the stories included in the collection are based on real rather than fictitious events, and the assertion that the writers, while being aware that their works are no more than wild words and fancy phrases, intend nonetheless to use them as an expedient means to promote the Buddha's Dharma.

The *Jikkinshō* for instance, completed in 1252, is a collection of short tales based on incidents in the lives of famous men in Chinese and Japanese history. The
authorship of the work is uncertain, although it has been attributed by some scholars to
the lay priest Rokuhara Jirōzaemon. The aim of the work, as stated in the preface, is
effectively didactic. It sets out to instruct the youth on the ten principles of conduct and
attempts to inculcate the values and artistic sensibilities of the aristocracy in these young
men.

The preface of the *Jikkinshō* is clearly written from a Buddhist standpoint. It is
hard to say whether this is due to the supposed priestly vocation of its author or because
it was from within the Buddhist position that a defence of such writing was traditionally
made. The author points out that human beings, irrespective of whether they are of high
or low birth, have very different dispositions. These dispositions give rise to behaviour
which brings great merit to those who are noble and great loss to those who are foolish.
He claims that by writing about events from the present which he has himself witnessed,
and those from the past that he has heard, he hopes to deter his readers from following
the evil path and encourage them to accept the path of goodness. He assures his readers
that he has not decorated his writings with false words (*munashiki kotoba*) and that he
has merely put together examples of events that have really taken place.

This is followed by a standard stance of modesty in which he deplores his own
lack of artistic accomplishment and expresses his embarrassment at the scorn his writing
is likely to be met with. He admits that although he is well aware of his shortcomings,
he is driven by an irresistible desire to write:

When I contemplate on the origins of this desire to seek pleasure
through writing, I see that it is not possible to escape from the karma
of words. This goes against the counsel of the noble and virtuous
and appears to ignore the very teachings of the Buddha. But when
one reflects calmly on the principle that all the *dharmas* have the
characteristics of the Ultimate Reality (*shōbō jissō*), then even the
wanton sport of wild words and frivolous phrases (*kyōgen kigo*) can
be transformed into the condition for praising the Buddhist Vehicle.
All the more so, if through one's writings, one despises arrogance
and promotes righteousness, how can one's work fail to be in accord with Buddhist principles? Why then should I have any hesitation? 27

The author of the Jikkinshō shows his familiarity with the Tendai doctrine of non-duality, in which all elements which manifest themselves cannot be seen as distinct from the Ultimate Reality (shōbō jissō). Referring to this, he suggests that there is no real distinction between secular and sacred writing. And yet, while at the abstract theoretical level the notion of duality was one that could be rejected, at the practical level of popularizing the faith there appears to have been a certain unease about accepting the implications of such a position. Thus as the great thirteenth century proselytizer of Buddhism, Ippen Shōnin put it:

It has been explained that ignorance is identical to enlightenment (bonnō soku bodai) and that samsara is nirvana (shōji soku nehan). Although I should teach this to people I feel that it is not in accordance with the potential of people at this time. This is because they will surely revert back to their original attachment to worldly desires and thus this teaching will only bring them harm. 28

For the notion of non-duality to be accepted at the practical level, it was necessary to introduce the idea of expedient means. As the great Madyāmika philosopher Nagarjuna put it, "The highest truth cannot be taught without recourse to conventional language (vyavahara)." 29 In this way even the Buddha's teachings fall into the category of relative truths as they attempt to verbalize what is ultimately inexpressible. But these relative truths are a valid and necessary means, the very basis for realizing the Absolute.

The notion of expedient means came to play a vital role in Mahayana Buddhism and is one of the fundamental themes of the Lotus sutra. The parable of the rich man

who saves his children from a burning house by promising them all the playthings they are attached to, and after luring them out of the house gives each of them a splendid ox-drawn carriage, is one of the most celebrated examples of expedient means. At one level the old man lied to his children; but his lie was justified because he had a noble end in mind. The splendid carriage he offers them is the 'Greater Vehicle' or the Mahayana teachings. However the 'Lesser Vehicles' or the Hinayana teachings are not to be rejected completely. They must be relied upon in order to lead ordinary human beings, who are still attached to worldly things, to the Ultimate Truth of Mahayana. The Absolute being conceptually indeterminable, it is not only possible but inevitable that we employ a variety of allegories, metaphors and parables as a means to suggest it.

In dealing with the question of artistic practice and its relationship to Buddhism, the notion of expedient means came to play a vital role and found its most popular expression in the term kyōgen kigo.

There was another reason why the term gained especially great currency in the Kamakura period. It was at this time that the theory of mappō (degeneration of the Dharma) came to be taken up seriously by Buddhists, and came to be widely accepted among the laity. It was believed that in the age of mappō, in which higher practices in order to reach nirvana had become almost meaningless, 'wild words and fancy phrases' were a particularly necessary and effective means for conveying the true meaning of the Dharma. It is to the concept of mappō that Ippen alludes when he claims that the teachings of non-duality are "not in accordance with the potential of people at this time".

The notion of mappō was first developed in India in response to the fear that the true Dharma was passing away. This had much to do with the fact that after the death of the historical Buddha, uncertainty existed regarding the true teachings of the founder,


due to the emergence of sectarian differences of opinion. The invasion of northern India in the sixth century A.D by the Huns, who were noted for their animosity to Buddhism, made the end of the Dharma seem even more imminent. This persecution appears to have served as the impetus to the development of the notion of mappō.

Although the concept of mappō arrived in Japan as early as the Nara period it was not taken up seriously until the late Heian period. In China Hui-Ssu (515-577) of the Tien T'ai sect had assigned dates to distinguish the three periods of the Buddha's Law:

- True teachings (shōbō) -500 years. This was the period after the death of the Buddha when the teaching, practice and attainment of Buddhist doctrine were possible.

- Simulated teachings (zōbō) -1000 years. In this period only the teaching and practice would remain.

- Decline of the Law (mappō) -10,000 years. Only the empty teachings would remain, while both practice and enlightenment would be ignored.

By the Japanese calculation, the first year of mappō was to commence in 1055. The twelfth century in Japan was marked by many major calamities. In 1177 a great fire ravaged the capital; in 1180 a whirlwind destroyed a large portion of the city; that same year Taira Kiyomori made a fruitless attempt to shift the capital, thus dislodging thousands from their homes. Famines raged in the years 1134 and 1181. Such instability within a span of merely fifty years cast a shadow of profound insecurity and gloom among the people. The disasters and upheavals of the twelfth century could thus be interpreted as tangible proof of the arrival of the period of the 'decline of the Law'. It is in this context that the increasing popularity of the term kyōgen kigo might be better understood.

Mujū Ichien (1226-1312), the compiler of the setsuwa collection the Shasekishū (A Collection of Sand and Pebbles), attempts a justification of his work on the basis of the notion of non-duality, and its practical realization through the concept of expedient
means. In the preface to this work, Muju states the purpose behind his compilation of tales:

Coarse words and refined expressions are both transformed into the First Principle. No kind of human activity is at variance with the Ultimate Reality (jisso). And so through the wanton sport of wild words and ornate phrases (kyōgen kigo) I wish to help people enter the marvellous Way of the Buddha and to show the profundity of the Buddhist doctrine which underlies the inconsequential events of ordinary life. Worthless though these events may seem, for the sake of foolish people who do not understand the great benefits to be had from the Buddhist doctrine,..., for those who do not discriminate between wise and foolish and for those who do not believe that our karma is predetermined, I have selected the clearest passages from the sutras and commentaries and set down the injunctions left by wise people from former times. There is not just one expedient means (hōben) for entering the Way. The causes and conditions for enlightenment are many. Once we understand this general principle, we will see that the purpose of the various teachings does not vary... Those who search for gold gather sand and extract the gold from it. Those who find pleasure in jewels gather pebbles and polish them. It is for this reason that I have called my work a Collection of Sand and Pebbles.32

For the writers of Buddhist setsuwa the primary question was how best to convey the Buddhist teachings to the ordinary people. The tales which they wrote had, in their stated view, no intrinsic value, but were merely a means by which this task could be achieved. That is, they assigned a clear didactic purpose to their writing.

Poetry in the Kamakura Period

By the twelfth century, Japanese poetry had established itself as the most prestigious of all artistic pursuits. It came to be represented in Imperial anthologies and presented at poetry contests. The teachings of a particular school of poetry were passed down in the manner of esoteric teachings from master to disciple. Poetry had become a

and it guaranteed fame and recognition to those who received instruction from an acknowledged master and who then achieved excellence in their own compositions through a single-minded dedication to their art. The place of *waka* was assured. It was through Japanese poetry that the aristocracy sought to define their special cultural identity. Poets such as Fujiwara Shunzei and his son Fujiwara Teika were first and foremost court poets, and they depended heavily on Imperial patronage for the promotion of their vocation. They came to dominate the world of poetry not only as composers of poetry, but also as theoreticians who defined and set the norms for poetic style and content.

Their devotion to poetry and its pursuit as a *michi* was, however, not clearly separated from their deep immersion in Buddhist values and practices. Even though poetry was their vocation and that which defined them socially, it was in Buddhist terms that they sought to define poetic goals and practices, and to work out a satisfactory resolution to the question of the place of their art in relation to Buddhism. In his poetic treatise *Koraifuteishō*, for example, Shunzei poses the problem of evaluating poetry and distinguishing between good and bad poetry. He begins by elucidating the various levels at which the composition of poetry is comparable to Buddhist practice:

The Tendai text the *Mo ho chih kuan* (*Makashikan*) begins with the following words by Kuan-ting, "The clarity and tranquility of great concentration and insight (shikan) has not been surpassed in the past to this day." From the moment we hear this we are struck with awe and admiration by its infinite profundity and its innermost significance is brought home to us. In the same way, understanding the good and bad in poetry, and penetrating its deep significance is hard to express in words. However by likening poetry to the practice of great concentration and insight, we can come to an

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intuitive understanding of it. In the text of the Mo hochikuan too, what is clarified first and foremost are the stages by which the Buddha's Dharma was transmitted. It explains to people the way in which the Dharma came to be handed down. The great enlightened one, Shakyamuni, transmitted the Dharma to Kashyapa who in turn passed it on to Ananda. In this way it was transmitted from master to disciple down through twenty three persons. When we hear of the way in which the Dharma was transmitted, we are filled with reverence. In the same way, we get a sense of the profundity of Japanese poetry when we consider that it has been handed down to us from ancient times, in the form of a series of anthologies, beginning with the Man'yōshū and continuing through the Kokinshū, Gosenshū, Shūishū and so on. However in one case we are talking about the profound truth of the Dharma, transmitted by the Buddha Shakyamuni, "the gold-mouthed one". In the case of Japanese poetry, on the other hand, we have the verbal sport of "wild words and ornate phrases" (kyōgen kigo). However, in poetry, something of the profound significance of things does emerge and through this we are brought to an understanding of the Way of the Buddha. Furthermore, it is because enlightenment and delusion are identical that in the Lotus sutra it says, "If he preaches secular texts...occupations that sustain life, and things of this sort, he shall in every case do so in accord with the Fine Dharma."35 The Samantabhadra bodhisattva sutra36 explains, "Of what person can we say that this is bad and that is good. Neither vice nor virtue have an owner. Our mind possesses of its own accord the character of the Void." This being the case I have likened the profound Way of Poetry to the three aspects of truth, namely, the void, the provisional and the mean.

In this passage from the Koraifuteishō, Shunzei uses the Makashikan to forge an aesthetics which is based on the Tendai doctrine of non-duality, and more specifically on the practice of concentration and insight (shikan). The term shikan is the Japanese rendering of two Sanskrit terms, samathā (shi) and vipasyana (kan). Samatha is the

35 Hurvitz, L. Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma, p 276.
36 The Tendai sect regards the Fugen kungyō or "Samantabhadra bodhisattva sutra" as the conclusion to the Lotus sutra. Together with the Muryōgikyō or "Sutra of Innumerable Meanings" which is seen as the preface, the three sutras are together called the Hokke sambukyō or the "Three-fold Lotus sutra".
cession of all perceptions and cognitions of ordinary experience, and thus the attainment of a state of mind which is calm and tranquil. *Vipasyana* is the contemplation of any object which forms part of our ordinary perception. As LaFleur puts it, "The contemplator, in accord with the fundamental impermanence of all things (himself included), regards them without obstruction (*muge*), that is, without the sort of discriminating mind that would seek to arrange phenomena into hierarchies of relative importance and select out some — primarily himself or some part of himself — as deserving of exemption from the rule of impartial impermanence (*mujo*)."37

The interdependence of all phenomena and the fact that they are in a state of constant flux means that there are no "essences" that can be penetrated. The phenomenal and the Ultimate are in the last analysis identical. The doctrine of non-duality enables Shunzei to demonstrate that any clear distinction between "sacred" and "secular" texts is untenable from within the Buddhist doctrine itself. This being the case, the composition of poetry has to be regarded as a Buddhist activity. The world of nature and human emotions are for him both rightfully the subject of poetry. This is because, as Konishi points out, there is an absolute rejection of existence conceived of as a confrontational relationship between the perceiver and the perceived. The contemplator is ultimately not distinct from the contemplated object. The phenomena presented in his poems are observed in such a way that both their coming into being and their dissolution are observed with calm and tranquility. It is the practice of *shikan* that lies at the centre of Shunzei's poetic practice.38

Among the many poems that Shunzei has left behind there are many like the twenty-eight poems based on the chapters of the Lotus sutra, the *nijūhappōnka*, which are avowedly religious in nature. However, Shunzei's poetry can be regarded as being profoundly 'Buddhist' not only or even primarily because of his conscious espousal of

religious themes, but because of the presence in it of a view of the world which is a Buddhist one. It is also worth noting, however, that Shunzei's poetry works within poetic norms and traditions. He pays the utmost regard to rules of poetic precedent, and it is within the confines of an established artistic medium that he seeks to imbue his own poems with a greater richness and depth. This fact is of some importance in the context of the present discussion, because it allows us to make a distinction between poets who were first and foremost dedicated to their art and whose main concern was with the composition of good poetry, and priests who had a high regard for poetry but sought to establish it as a viable religious practice.

**Priests as the Defenders of Japanese Poetry.**

One such priest was the writer of the collection of *setsuwa* entitled *Shasekishū*, Mujū Ichien. Mujū presents an elaborate defence of *waka* as a religious practice — a reflection of the high regard with which this artistic practice came to be held within all members of the literati. Mujū's position, however, departs in important ways from that of Shunzei. He draws a clear distinction between poetry that concerns itself with themes of love and which is steeped in attachment, in other words poetry as *kyōgen kigo*, and poetry which serves as a means to understanding the Buddhist teachings. Mujū writes:

As a rule, the reason why *waka* is included among all that constitutes *kyōgen kigo* is because calling itself love poetry, it is drawn towards human emotions, it is steeped in themes of love that cannot be depended upon in any way and it adorns itself with empty words. But if by putting forward the Buddhist teachings, and bearing the spirit of the transience of all things, *waka* weakens one's ties with worldly things and one's thoughts of the mundane; if by looking at the leaves falling in the wind, one forgets one's attachment to fame and wealth and comprehends the worthlessness of worldly existence; if by reciting poems on the snow and the moon one's heart is enlightened into comprehending the unblemished Ultimate Truth, then, *waka* can serve as a go-between for entering the Buddhist Path and as a means to understanding the Buddhist teachings. It is for
this reason that the men of old who practised the Buddhist Dharma in no way cast aside the Way of Poetry.\textsuperscript{39}

For Mujū Japanese poetry was important because he saw it as an especially efficacious means of understanding the Buddhist Dharma. This belief in the special power of \textit{waka} was derived from theoretical formulations within Tendai and Shingon Buddhism. It was further bolstered by the prevailing view that the Shinto gods had expressed themselves through Japanese poetry, a view which itself was linked up in interesting ways with the dominant ideological force of the times, namely, Buddhism.

From as early as the Nara period, Buddhism gained ascendancy in Japan not by standing in opposition to Shinto, Confucian and Taoist beliefs, but by attempting to integrate these varied philosophical traditions within a Buddhist perspective. One way in which Shintoism came to be assimilated within the Buddhist framework was through the scheme of \textit{honji suijaku} (true nature-trace manifestation), whereby the Shinto deities were regarded as local manifestations of the Buddhas or bodhisattvas, left behind in Japan especially in order to save the Japanese. This view had implications that were not overlooked by advocates of poetry. The first poem composed in the native language was said to have been by the god Susano-o-mikoto and was recorded in the \textit{Kojiki}. If the gods were manifestations of the Buddha and composed Japanese poetry, it could be argued that \textit{waka} constituted the words of the Buddha himself.

In the \textit{Shasekishū}, using the theory of \textit{honji suijaku}, this is in fact what Mujū argues:

The gods of Japan are manifest traces, the unexcelled transformation bodies (\textit{ōjin}) of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. The God Susano-o-mikoto initiated the composition of poetry in thirty-one syllables with the "many-layered fence at Izumo". Japanese poems do not vary in any way from the words of the Buddha.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Shasekishū}, pp 220-21.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid}, p 223.
Muju in fact presents an interesting extension of the argument that the Shinto gods express themselves through Japanese poetry, and that *waka* therefore constitutes mystical verses or *dharani*. The especially close ties between Shinto and the esoteric sects of both the Tendai and Shingon schools contributed to the development of the theory of *honji suijaku* and the belief that Japanese poetry was equivalent to mystical chants or *dharani*. The Shingon school claimed to teach an esoteric doctrine in which the three mysteries (*sanmitsu*) of the body, speech and thought of the Buddha can be communicated to human beings through certain ritualistic prescriptions. The means of communication had three aspects; physical gestures such as the *mudra* (which involves particular ways of intertwining the fingers), mystical verses (*mantras* and *dharani*) and yogic concentration. It is through these rituals that a devotee is able to realize within himself his own innate Buddhahood. Since esoteric teachings transcended verbal explanation and could not be grasped through discursive forms of writing, it could be argued that poetry, because of its very brevity, was the most appropriate form through which to intuit the Buddha's Dharma. This was in fact precisely what was argued by Muju:

Japanese poems do not differ from the words of the Buddha. The *dharani* (mystic verses) of India are simply the words used by the people of that country. The Buddha used these words to explain *dharani*. For this reason, the Master of Meditation, I-hsing, in his commentary on the Great Sun sutra says, "The languages of every region are all *dharani.*" Had the Buddha been born in Japan he would have used Japanese for mystic verses... Although *dharani* employ the ordinary language of India, when the words are maintained as *dharani*, they have the virtue of lessening our sins and removing suffering. Japanese poetry too, uses ordinary words that are part of worldly life but when they are maintained as *waka* they cannot fail to

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41 The Shingon or True Word sect was established in Japan by the great priest Kukai, better known by his title, Kōbō Daishi. He returned from a period of extensive study in China in 807 and brought back to Japan a body of doctrine which he called Shingon or True Word. Shingon or True Word is a translation of the Sanskrit *mantra* which means a mystic doctrine that cannot be expressed in ordinary words.
be effective. All the more so when they embody the spirit of the Buddha's Dharma, they are without doubt dharani. Although the words used in India, China and Japan are all different, their meaning is comprehended and they all serve the same purpose. It is for this reason that the Buddhist teachings spread and its doctrines were accepted and the benefits have not been without avail. There are no fixed standards as far as words are concerned. So long as their meaning is grasped and the thoughts are expressed, they cannot fail to receive a response from the gods and Buddhas.42

It was a familiarity with the esoteric practices of Tendai and Shingon that inspired many poets and priests to regard poetry with the utmost seriousness, and to take it up as part of their religious practices. The poet/priest Saigyō, who had strong ties with Mount Koya, the centre of Shingon practices, is credited with having taught many a venerable priest the true significance of Japanese poetry. In the Biography of Priest Myōe, it is related that Saigyō visited Myōe and said to him:

_Waka_ is the true form of the Buddha. Reciting one line of _waka_ is equivalent to carving one statue of the Buddha; likewise continuing to meditate on one verse of _waka_ is like reciting the sacred esoteric texts of Shingon. It is through poetry that I have mastered the Law.43

In the _Shaseki shū_ Mujū relates how Saigyō, after he became a recluse, received instruction in the innermost meaning of the Tendai mantras (_shingon_). When he was asked by the Abbot Jien to communicate these teachings to him, Saigyō is said to have replied, "To begin with practice writing poetry. If you do not understand poetry you will not understand the essence of the mantras." It is said that it was after Jien became an adept at poetry that Saigyō transmitted the esoteric teachings to him.44

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42 _Shaseki shū_, pp 222-23; See also Yamada Shozen, "Chūsei kōki ni okeru waka soku darani no jissen", _Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū_, Vol XVI, No. 1, December 1967.


44 _Shaseki shū_, p 251.
Thus a justification of poetry emerged from within the Tendai and Shingon doctrinal positions, as well as from the assimilation of native practices into Buddhism through the workings of the notion of *honji suijaku*. For court poets such as Shunzei and Teika, poetry was a *michi* that had to be cultivated with the utmost dedication. It was seen as having a value that transcended all other concerns. The possibility of working out a theory and practice of poetry that was integrally linked to Buddhist ideals and practices undoubtedly served to further enhance the place of poetry as an ideal worthy of pursuit.

At the same time, literati monks such as Myōe and Jien, who belonged to the ecclesiastical order and whose major preoccupation was with the study of the scriptures and the following of the Buddhist Path, also argued that Japanese poetry had a central place in Buddhist practice and that the true nature of the Dharma could not be comprehended without devotion to the spirit of poetry. In the *Myōe Shōnin Ikun* (*The Posthumous Teachings of the Priest Myōe*), Myōe writes:

> If we look at people from times past we will observe that not one among them has been a true follower of the Buddhist Dharma who has not dedicated himself whole-heartedly to an artistic pursuit (*suki*) or who has unashamedly dabbled in many things without devotion to any one pursuit...In the past as well as today, Buddhists who are worthy of praise, have emerged from among those who have devoted themselves to an art (*suki*). Although writing poems of praise (*shōshi*) or participating in the composition of Japanese poetry (*waka*) and linked verse (*renge*) is by no means the same as the Buddha's Dharma, those who dedicate themselves to such activities will eventually also devote themselves to the Buddhist Way. They will be full of wisdom and their gentle dispositions will display great refinement.⁴⁵

Despite the different perspectives from which Shunzei, the court poet, and Myōe, the influential prelate of the Kegon sect, approach the composition of poetry, they display remarkable agreement in their belief that poetry is an exalted artistic form that makes an

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important contribution to the understanding of the Dharma. For Shunzei poetry and religious practice are one. Myōe, on the other hand, is careful to point out that they are not the same, but goes as far as to say that commitment to the one can create a state of mind that is conducive to the understanding of the other.

Kamo No Chōmei and the 'Aesthete Recluses'

The necessity of collapsing the difference between artistic and religious practices also became the overriding concern of a rather different group of poet/priests. These were the religious recluses or tonseisha, who played a particularly significant literary role in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The term tonsei or 'escaping from the world' is to be distinguished from shukke or 'leaving the family'. The latter term implies leaving one's home and family and formally entering the priesthood. Tonseisha on the other hand did not enter temple organizations and engage in the study of the complex aspects of the religion, or write erudite doctrinal works. They rejected the institutional constraints of organized religion as those well as those of court society. Music and poetry became a central part of the quest for spiritual purity which the religious recluses sought. The Japanese scholar Mezaki Tokue has coined the term suki no tonseisha or 'aesthete-recluses' to describe this group, who had renounced worldly life but who sought enlightenment through the refined pursuits of poetry and music.46

The poet and priest Saigyō is regarded as epitomising the ideal of the aesthete-recluse. Saigyō chose to live in isolation in a grass-thatched hut in the mountains travelling frequently to sites famous for their natural beauty, which became the subject of his own poetic compositions. A collection of tales, the Senjūshō (A Collection of Selected Tales) is attributed to Saigyō. Throughout this work, written with the purpose of teaching the Buddhist faith, there is a constant return to the place of poetic tradition. The authorship of the Senjūshō is uncertain but it seems very likely that the attribution

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to the highly acclaimed poet and recluse Saigyō is part of a conscious device to legitimate the place of poetry within an avowedly Buddhist discourse. Many of the stories in this collection are concerned with breaking down the dichotomy between poetic and religious practice. Support for this position is sought from a variety of Buddhist doctrinal teachings.

For instance, we are told about a priest of obscure origins who wandered about the capital with his body encrusted with dirt, and wrapped in matting in place of clothing. He would occasionally recite the nembutsu or intone important passages from the sutras but in general he tended to ignore the written scriptures. One day he visited a holy man named Yoshizane who asked him with deep earnestness to recite at least one word from the scriptures which would help clear his mind of delusion. It so happened that morning glories beaded with dew were in bloom nearby. When the breeze caused the dew to fall, the priest sighed and recited the following poem:

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Miru ya ika ni       Do you see how
Ada ni mo sakeru     The transparent morning dew
Asagao no             Disappears
Hana ni sakidatsu    Even before the brief bloom
Kesa no shiratsuyu    Of the morning glory
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Then declaring, "This is true scripture", the priest departed and was not seen again. The narrator of the story expresses deep admiration for the priest and draws on the Zoku Honchō Ōjōden to point out that the priest was successful in achieving rebirth in the Pure Land.47

In this instance, the author of the Senjūshō endorses the priest's assertion of the superiority of poetry over the written scriptures. He turns to the 'historical' recording of the great priests of Japan who have attained enlightenment and points out that the priest's name appears in this compilation. This is proof of the validity of the priest's claim that

poetry and scriptural writing are identical and that enlightenment is possible as much through poetry as it is through the religious texts.

The author of the *Senjūshō* turns to different aspects of the Buddhist doctrine to claim that the practice of poetry is identical with Buddhist practice. The priest Eien, we are told, held an important position at the Yamashina temple. Not only did he surpass others in wisdom, he was also a master of the six styles of poetry. At times he would seclude himself in the meditation hall and would calm his mind by meditating on the Dharma world (hōkai). At other times he would sit under the cherry blossoms or before the moon and compose poetry in Japanese. One day a friend asked him, "Does poetry not interfere with your religious studies?" Eien replied:

> Poetry makes the mind grow continually clearer. When one composes poetry conceptualizing in poetic terms the feelings of love, grief, and pain, all these, as they are no more than the products of the mind, help us to realize the truth of the doctrine of Consciousness Only (yuishiki). There are no dharmas outside the mind. They are mere fabrications of the mind. Why then do you ask me if poetry would disturb my mind and interfere with my studies? What a question!  

We are told that the friend's question causes Eien to weep. It is the friend's lack of understanding of the Buddhist teachings, in this instance of the Hossō school of Buddhist thought, which evoked this response in Eien. The Hossō or Mere Ideation school attributes the existence of the outer world to inner ideation. The whole world is of an illusory nature and a creation of, an outward manifestation of the mind, of ideation. For one such as Eien who had achieved great wisdom in his understanding of the Hossō doctrine, the separation of poetry and Buddhist scholarship was meaningless and it was the irrelevance of the priest's question as much as his ignorance of the ultimate meaning of the religious teachings that caused Eien to weep. The implication of the story is that a person who has achieved such a level of enlightenment is able to move smoothly from

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meditation to composing poetry without experiencing any sense of contradiction or
difference between the two.

Kamo no Chômei followed in the tradition of recluses such as Saigyô, whom he
admired and sought to emulate. As the following chapters seek to demonstrate, Chômei
explored the term suki in order to restate the relationship between aesthetic and religious
ideals to his own satisfaction. The attempt involved a redefinition and relocation of the
ideals of courtly elegance and artistic refinement and making them consonant with the
spiritual values he espoused in his life as tonseisha. Chômei's collection of religious
setsuwa, the Hosshinshû, and his account of his life as a recluse living in Hino, the
Hôjôki, both address the question of ways in which the distinction between religion and
the arts can be collapsed.

Conclusion

To summarize, we can say that throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the
answer to the question of the role and validity of literary writing and particularly poetry
and the nature of its exact relationship with Buddhism was sought from within the
Buddhist doctrine. The central concept underlying the notion that poetry and Buddhism
did not occupy two separate realms, that they were in fact identical, came from the
Buddhist concept of non-duality(funi). Upaya (hôben, expedient means) was a further
elaboration of the fundamental truth of non-duality. Precisely because it was based on
this concept, upaya was an attempt to affirm the identity of the phenomenal and the
Absolute. Within the scheme of non-duality there is no possibility of conceiving of a
hierarchy of means and ends. It is for this reason that LaFleur has suggested the term
"modes" rather than "expedient means" as being a more appropriate translation of the
term upaya.49 The teachings of the Lotus sutra stress the notion of upaya which can be
understood as a variety of different modes, all of which are on a par with one another
and which in different ways seek to explicate the Buddha's Dharma to different people.

49 LaFleur, William. The Karma of Words, pp 84-85.
And yet while at the theoretical level there is no contradiction between non-duality and upaya, Japanese litterateurs implicitly accepted the notion of a hierarchy in their interpretation of upaya. This can be best seen in the use of the term kyōgen kigo which clearly categorized literature, and particularly poetry, as frivolous words and ornate phrases and then sought to salvage such writing on the grounds that it could serve as a means to a noble end, namely, Buddhism. Even those writers who sought a justification of poetry on the grounds that it was identical with scriptural writing, nonetheless shifted their argument, sliding into what they saw as a more pragmatic and readily comprehensible position, namely that of poetry as upaya. This tension between non-duality and upaya, which did not exist at the doctrinal level, became a real one for both Japanese litterateurs and Buddhist priests. The reasons for this can be found in the development of literature and Buddhism, each of which had its own special and yet overlapping traditions.

The perception that 'secular' writing constituted a problem had found its earliest articulation during the Heian period in Japan. By the twelfth century, one could say very schematically that two important traditions had emerged, a Buddhist tradition and a literary tradition. Both were highly valued elements of the culture of the time; both had social and institutional networks in which they were embedded. Japanese literature, for instance, was dominated by poetry, which was cultivated with single-minded dedication as a michi. Poets took part in poetry contests, attempted to have their poems included in Imperial anthologies, and were supported by the patronage they received from the court. The study of Buddhism was carried out in the monastic institutions that were set up by its various sects. Buddhist priests devoted themselves to religious practice, to the study of the sutras and commentaries, and the composition of religious treatises. Because both traditions were important, and because they occupied the same historical and cultural space, neither could afford to ignore or dismiss the other.

And yet it was precisely because both were important, because they occupied the same cultural space and because their social and institutional bases overlapped and
crisscrossed, it would be incorrect to describe them as entirely distinct traditions, as if they were 'competing' with each other for dominance. It is this ambiguous relationship which at once set the ground and formed the subject of a dialogue; a dialogue not between two distinct elements (which would imply self-contained entities coming into dialogue) nor between identities (which, of course, would render debate impossible); but a dialogue between traditions which overlapped to such a degree that they were constantly moving towards each other, but without being able to effect a total union. This might account both for the acceptance of the implications of non-duality and the necessity of subsuming literature within Buddhism through the notion of upaya.

The conflict between literary and Buddhist practices was, as mentioned earlier, handled by writers in many different ways but always within the framework of the Buddhist teachings. But for all their different responses, writers as different as the Heian court lady who wrote the Sarashina nikki, Shunzei the court poet and Saigyō the recluse all shared an anxiety about the value of literary writing. So much so that this discomfort formed the stuff of the dreams that these writers experienced, or are believed to have experienced. The poet Shōtetsu, in his Shotetsu monogatari, records that in his old age Shunzei had serious doubts about his poetic activities, and worried lest they acted as a hindrance to his enlightenment. Shōtetsu writes:

Even when Shunzei became an old man, he spent his days and nights doing nothing but composing poetry and failed to perform any religious practices towards his future lives. Worrying about his spiritual future, Shunzei secluded himself for seventeen days at the Sumiyoshi shrine. Full of lamentations, he prayed to the God with the following words, "If poetry is indeed a worthless pursuit, I shall set aside the Path of Poetry as of now and devote myself solely to

50 For example, in a prose introduction to a poem that he wrote, Saigyō explains that he was invited by the priest Jakunen to contribute a hundred-poem collection but that he chose to decline. Saigyō who was on his way to the Kumano shrine had a dream in which Tankai, the administrator of Kumano, in conversation with the great poet Shunzei, explained to the latter that even in the degenerate age of their times, only the Way of Poetry remained unaltered. This appears to have reaffirmed Saigyō's faith in the Way of Poetry. See Saigyō Sankashū zenchūkai, Watanabe Tamotsu ed., Tokyo: Kasama shobō, 1971, pp 1052-3.
religious observances that will help towards my future lives." On a full moon night of the seventh day, the deity of Sumiyoshi revealed himself to Shunzei in a dream and indicated that the Way of Poetry and the Way of the Buddha were completely indistinguishable. It was then that Shunzei realized that the Way of Buddhism was to be sought not outside of or separate from the Way of Poetry and it reinforced his belief that the Way of Poetry had to be taken very seriously.\(^51\)

Both the problem and one form of its resolution is contained in Shunzei's dream. The identity of the Way of Poetry and the Way of the Buddha is demonstrated to Shunzei by none other than a Shinto deity, who, as the manifestation of the Buddha in Japan, speaks with authority. The complex interplay of *honji suijaku* and non-duality forms the basis of the alleged resolution of Shunzei's dilemma. As we have seen, this is a dilemma that, to varying degrees, became a concern of a great many Japanese writers. For Kamo no Chōmei, perhaps more than most, it was particularly pressing, as evidenced by the important place it occupies in his writings. Kamo no Chōmei's resolutions — for he advocated different answers to the problem at different times, or at least in different works — form the subject of the following chapters. Before turning to a study of his writings, an examination of Chōmei's life may help to clarify the circumstances which shaped his understanding of both literature and Buddhism.

CHAPTER II

KAMO NO CHÔMEI: COURT POET AND BUDDHIST PRIEST

Introduction

While little is known about the lives of many well-known writers of the Heian and Kamakura periods, Chômei is something of an exception, for there is a wide range of material that sheds light on his life. The genealogies of the Kamo family provide interesting information about his family. The diaries and literary works of his contemporaries recount the major social and political events of the times, and on occasion speak directly of Chômei's personality or of his activities. A great deal of Chômei's life can also be reconstructed from his own literary works.

Chômei's collection of poetry, the Kamo no Chômei shû, is the only surviving work written by Chômei during the period when he was at court. The rest of his writings were composed after the year 1208 when he moved to Hino to live as a recluse. The Mumyōshō, his treatise on poetry, is the only work which speaks directly of his life at court as an aspiring poet. The Hosshinshū, his collection of religious tales, does not refer to his own life. In the Hōjōki he describes at length the many disasters that afflicted the capital during his youth; more importantly, it provides an insight into Chômei's feelings and moods after he had chosen to live on Mount Toyama in Hino.

A study of Chômei's literary works written in the last phase of his life form the central focus of this thesis. Such an account, however, would be incomplete without a discussion of the events and circumstances that marked his formative years as a courtier and a poet. The purpose of this chapter then, is a two-fold one. First, it is an attempt to
reconstruct Chômei's life as a court poet; the period from 1181 to 1204 traces his increased involvement in the poetry contests of the times and his active role in the compilation of the Imperial anthology of poetry, the *Shinkokinshū*. The *Mumyōshō* provides ample material from this period which points to Chômei's ambition to become a poet of note, and to the measure of success he achieved in this sphere. Second, the chapter focuses on the circumstances that brought about a major turning-point in Chômei's life, leading him to leave the capital and take the tonsure in 1204. The life of a low-ranking courtier who had found a somewhat tenuous point of entry into the world of the aristocracy through his activities as a poet, which, from all accounts, he took with the utmost seriousness, had to be significantly altered. It was through devotion to the Way of the Buddha that he sought to give a new meaning to his life. His writings from this period bear testimony to the seriousness of his new intent and they will be examined extensively later in the thesis.

It may be well to begin this inquiry by taking account of the available explanations of that critical moment of reversal or transformation that draws attention to Chômei's life. Minamoto Ienaga's diary contains perhaps the fullest contemporary statement we have regarding the major concerns in Chômei's life and the reasons for his leaving the court and taking the tonsure. Ienaga writes:

People who devote themselves to any one thing no matter how inconsequential are bestowed with extraordinary favours by the Emperor. And yet, Chômei failed to realize his aspirations! This, I have been told, is entirely because of his karma from previous lives. Anyhow, this person Kamo no Chômei, after becoming an orphan, ceased to take part in affairs relating to the shrine and lived in seclusion. But because of his reputation in the field of poetry, he was summoned by the Emperor and he soon became an official at the Bureau of Poetry. From that time onwards, he would take part in all functions relating to poetry and composed poems at all the regular poetry contests. He never left the Bureau and worked there day and night with the greatest diligence. Just around the time when the Emperor contemplated bestowing his favours on Chômei should some appropriate occasion arise, the post of head official (negi) fell
vacant at the Lower Kamo shrine. Everyone was convinced that this
time the Emperor would make sure that Chōmei would get the post.
Even before Chōmei had expressed his interest in this appointment, it
looked very much as though it would be his. When this rumour came
to Chōmei’s ears, he appeared unable to control his tears of joy.

However we are told that Sukekane, who was Head Intendant of the shrine at that
time, protested in no uncertain terms, pushing the case for the appointment of his own
son, on the grounds that he held a higher rank and that he had devoted himself to the
affairs of the shrine much more than Chōmei had done. Ienaga goes on to explain how
the Emperor was forced to give up his earlier plan:

Hearing all this, the Emperor felt that everything was in Sukekane’s
favour. The Emperor then decided to upgrade a smaller shrine that
was affiliated to the main Kamo shrine, accord it the same status as
the latter and to create the post of head official for this shrine, to
which then, Chōmei could be appointed.

However, Chōmei turned down the Emperor’s offer. Ienaga suggests that this
"stubbornness" arose out of Chōmei’s feeling that he had failed to get what he had
wanted in the first place, and even wonders if Chōmei was "not out of his right mind"
in refusing such an attractive proposition. He continues:

After that I heard that he had gone into total seclusion - no ordinary
matter. He did not say where he was but after some time had
elapsed, he sent fifteen poems that he had composed to the Emperor.
... The rumour was that he had taken the tonsure and was quietly
carrying on with his religious pursuits at Ōhara. I felt that he was a
person who carried things too far. On the other hand, Chōmei
probably thought of this world as a deluded dream in which due to
certain karmic links from previous lives, he had been strongly fated
to enter the True Path.¹

Ienaga also describes how the Emperor at one stage ordered him to send a messenger up to Ohara to find out if Chōmei still had the *biwa* called *tenarai*. Chōmei sent back the *biwa* with two poems written on the plectrum: these poems expressed his sense of loss at parting with the *biwa* which had obviously come to be a symbol of his love for music and his life at the court.

Ienaga concludes:

After that when I met him again quite by chance, he had grown so thin and shrunken that I could hardly recognize him. He said, "If I had not deeply resented the society I lived in, the darkness of this fleeting world would not have become illuminated for me" and weeping copiously he wrung the sleeves of his priestly robes drenched in tears. He went on, "Although I have cast aside thoughts of worldly life, there is still something that holds me back a little", and pulled out from his sutra bag the plectrum of the biwa on which I had written the replies to his poems. He added, "Somehow this will accompany me beneath the moss and decay with my body." The fact that it was so hard for him to forget and reject completely what he had set his heart upon and felt that it would even be a hindrance to the religious path made me feel very sorry for him.  

The *Jikkinshō* also has a short section devoted to Kamo no Chōmei. This section illustrates how even the deluded state of mind of one who harbours resentments in this world can, on occasion, become the means by which the person enters the True Path. The author of the *Jikkinshō* tells us that Chōmei belonged to a family of officials of the Kamo shrine and that he was well-known as one who was deeply devoted to the Ways of Music and Poetry. He wished to become head of the Kamo shrine but as things did not go according to his wishes, he bore the world a grudge and took the tonsure. He points out that even after Chōmei began to live in seclusion in his hut, he had his *koto* and *biwa* by his side and that he would amuse himself by playing music in between his recitals of the *nembutsu*. He concludes with the following statement: "The fact that he

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was unable to give up indulging in the pleasures of music is a reflection of the extent of his most admirable devotion to the Way of Music (suki)"

A rather different account of Chômei's decision to take the tonsure appears in a treatise on music called the Bunkidan which was probably written between the years 1278 and 1288, more than sixty years after Chômei's death. According to this work, Chômei, who was Nakahara Ariyasu's pupil in the field of music, had received instruction in the performance of one of the secret melodies, the yoshinsō. Because of Chômei's passionate involvement in the art, he invited several acclaimed musicians to the Kamo shrine and the incident which came to be known as the hikkyoku zukushi (the playing of the secret melodies) took place. The Bunkidan tells us that Chômei performed the takuboku melody on his biwa. This was a secret melody that had not been transmitted to him by his teacher, and hence he was not authorized to play it. This fact leaked out and came to the ears of Fujiwara Tadamichi, who was at that time in charge of the Imperial Court Music Hall. Tadamichi complained to Go Toba-in that among the secret teachings of the Way of Music, this particular melody had been accorded special importance, and had its own traditions of transmission; hence for someone like Chômei, who belonged to a low rank, to play this melody without formal instruction in front of a large audience was a serious crime.

According to the Bunkidan, Chômei admitted to having played the takuboku but claimed that it was the extremity of his commitment to the Way (michi ni fukeru kokorozashi no setsu naru koto) that had led him to do so. Go Toba-in did not consider what Chômei had done as a grave crime, but Tadamichi protested strongly saying that any violation of the Way would set a precedent for other departures from authorized practice in the future. The Bunkidan concludes that it was for this reason that Chômei had to leave the capital, and decided to follow the Way of Religion. The account goes on

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3 Jikkinshô, Vol.II, pp 91-2
to say that Chōmei built himself a ten-foot square hut at the Bay of Futami and spent the rest of his life there.\(^4\)

Several interesting features emerge from these accounts. The first, and quite undisputed, is the fact of Chōmei's deep involvement with music and poetry. This passion was so great that, as Ienaga's account has it, Chōmei found it hard to part with the plectrum of his biwa even after becoming a priest, though in the end he felt constrained to do so. His correspondence with the Emperor and his meeting with Ienaga reflected his continued involvement with the world of poetry, which he had ostensibly left behind. But it was also accompanied by the fear that all this was pointless and even deleterious to the Buddhist cause that he had espoused.

A second interesting suggestion regarding Chōmei's life emerges from the statement regarding his disappointed hopes at court. This is that he had hoped to follow in his father's footsteps, gain some social standing in that way, and thereby be enabled to continue the pursuit of music and poetry. Both Ienaga's diary and the Jikkinshō suggest that Chōmei's failure to achieve these 'worldly' ambitions changed the course of his life. He chose renunciation over the life of a low-ranking and frustrated courtier.

It will be observed, of course, that the Bunkidan gives a rather different account of the reasons for Chōmei's departure from the court and his taking of the tonsure. There are, however, questions regarding the authenticity of this account. There is no mention of the incident that the Bunkidan speaks of in Ienaga's diary, which ends in the eleventh month of the year 1207. Ienaga himself was an accomplished musician, and this event, had it occurred, would surely have created enough of a furore at court for Ienaga to write about it. Another factor which has led scholars to question the authenticity of the version in the Bunkidan is the fact that among the musicians who are listed as having participated in the gathering that Chōmei organized when he played the secret melody are

people like Fujiwara Sanetoshi, who in the year 1204 (the approximate date of Chōmei’s departure from court) was only eleven years old, and Fujiwara Morikane, who at the time was fourteen. Both the *Jikkinshō* and Ienaga’s diary name Ōhara as the place where Chōmei went to after taking the tonsure. The *Bunkidan* alone stands at variance with these, for it describes Chōmei as going to the Bay of Futami and spending his life there.

However the story about Chōmei in the *Bunkidan* is fascinating for what it tells us about the Way of Music and its traditions, and above all about Chōmei’s reputation as a *sukimono* whose extreme involvement in music prevented him from confining himself to the rules and norms of that tradition. Even if this account is apocryphal, it does indicate that a legend had developed around Chōmei’s obsessive passion for the arts, a passion which formed such a large part of his life until he took the tonsure.

After his departure from the court and his acceptance of the Buddhist path, Chōmei’s life developed in a very different way. But traces of his earlier life persisted in the form of his continued attachment to poetry and music, as evidenced by the poems (in Ienaga’s account) that he sent to the cloistered Emperor Go-Toba, and the feelings he had for the plectrum of his *biwa*.

**The Early Years.**

Kamo no Chōmei, or Kamo no Nagaakira as he was known at the time, was born in 1155, the eldest son of Kamo no Nagatsugu, the Head Intendant of the Lower Kamo shrine. This shrine was situated at the confluence of the Kamo river, flowing from Kitayama, and the Takano river flowing from the direction of Ōhara. The deities worshipped at this shrine were the *Kamo Taketsunomi no Mikoto* and the Tama Yorihime. Together with the Upper Kamo shrine, the Lower Kamo shrine was held in

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5 Iso Mizue, "Hikkyoku zukushi jiken o megutte, sono ni", *Kamo no Chōmei no kenkyū*, 2, Nisho gakuen daigaku, Kishi zemihen, June 1976.

great veneration by the court aristocracy. The Kamo festival held in the middle of the fourth month was referred to simply as "the festival" by the courtiers, an indication that it had come to be the single most important Shinto festival at that time. The shrine's power was not purely spiritual: owning as it did a large amount of land around its precincts, it wielded considerable material power, as did many of the Buddhist temple complexes of the time.

According to the various family genealogies of the Kamo family, Chōmei had a brother called Nagamori, who at some stage had been accorded the fifth rank. Although his name is mentioned in Chōmei's *Mumyōshō*, nothing is known about him. The same is true for Chōmei's mother. About his father, however, we know somewhat more. In the year 1160, Chōmei's father was awarded the Junior Fourth Rank, Second Grade. The incident is recorded in Fujiwara Tadachika's *Sankaiki*. On the twenty-seventh day of that year the Emperor Nijō visited the Kamo shrine. Tadachika was in charge of the ceremonial dances on that day. Earlier, when the Emperor Konoe had visited the shrine, he had not bestowed any favours on Nagatsugu, and it was in order to make up for this that the Emperor Nijō raised his rank. Chōmei also benefited from his father's good connections with the Emperor, for the following year he was appointed to the Fifth Rank, Junior Grade, at the age of seven. This was done through the favour of the Emperor's second consort (*chūgū*), Shushi Naishinnō, who was the daughter of Toba-in and Bifukumon-in.

Thus Chōmei's life would seem to have begun in auspicious circumstances. His first major set-back came with the premature retirement and subsequent death of his father. The last mention of Nagatsugu as Head Intendant of the Kamo shrine appears in an entry for the twenty-ninth day of the eighth month of the year 1169 in the

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8 *Mumyōshō*, p 69.
His retirement seems to have been brought about by continued ill health. Scholars surmise that his death occurred sometime between the winter of the year 1172 and the spring of the next year. Chōmei was eighteen or nineteen years old at that time.

Nagatsugu's place as Head Intendant was taken by Sukesue, who was the son of Arisue, Nagatsugu's elder brother.

It is not clear why Chōmei or his own brother did not succeed to their father's post. One of the first poems that Chōmei wrote, and that he included in his collection of poetry, the *Kamo no Chōmei shū*, was composed, as he says "while looking at cherry blossoms the year after my father died."

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Haru shi areba  Spring is here
Kotoshi mo hana wa  This year too
Sakinikeri  The cherry blossoms are in bloom.
Chiru o oshimishi  Where has he gone
Hito wa izura wa  The one who lamented their scattering?
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Another poem of the same period was later included in the *Fubokuwakashō*. The *Fubokuwakashō* was a collection of poems compiled by Fujiwara Nagakiyo around the year 1310. In the postscript to the work he explains that he put together poems from the private collections of some poets as well as some poems that had appeared in the Imperial anthologies, with the view to help in the compilation of future anthologies, and for the edification of those who wished to devote themselves to the Way of Poetry. The poem was:

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It was perhaps his failure to inherit his father's position that he refers to when he speaks of himself as a poor orphan, unable to realize the hopes that his father had in mind for him.

In the *Kamo no Chōmei shū* there is an exchange of poems in which Chōmei again expresses his sense of despair at the death of his father. He writes:

- **Sakura yue** Lying here on Kataokayama
- **Kata oka yama ni** In order to view the cherry blossoms,
- **Fuseru mi mo** Unable to realize
- **Omoitogeneba** What he had hoped for
- **Aware oya nashi** This poor orphan.

Seeing this poem, Kamo no Sukemitsu replied with the following verse:

- **Sumi wabinu** Weary of living
- **Izasa wa koemu** Nothing remains but to cross
- **Shide no yama** The mountain of death.
- **Sate da ni oya no** At least in this way I can follow
- **Ato o fumu beki** My father's footsteps.

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12 *Kamo no Chōmei zenshū*, p.44. This poem employs the technique of allusive variation (*honkadon*) and harks back to the following poem, attributed to Prince Shōtoku Taishi, which was composed under rather different circumstances:

- **Shina teru ya** Is he dead, I wonder?
- **Kataokayama ni** Lying on Kataokayama
- **Ii ni uete** Starving from lack of food,
- **Fuseru tabibito** This poor traveller,
- **Aware oyanashi** Without a father.

The Kataoka mountain that Chōmei refers to is not the one that Shōtoku Taishi is said to have visited in Yamato province. Kataoka yama was another name for the Kamo mountain. While expressing his disappointment and sense of helplessness at the death of his father, Chōmei skilfully uses his knowledge of the poetic traditions of his times. Chōmei says that he is not lying on Kataoka yama starving. He has come there to view the cherry blossoms which, judging by the poem we quoted earlier, were deeply admired by his father.
Sumi wabite
Isogi na koeso
Shide no yama
Kono yo ni oya no
Ato o koso fume

Weary of living
Do not hasten to cross
The mountain of death.
It is in this world that you should follow
Your father's footsteps.

To this Chōmei responded with the following poem:

Nasake araba
Ware madowasu na
Kimi nomi zo
Oya no ato fumu
Michi wa shiruran

If you have feelings for me
Do not misguide me.
For you alone know
The Way to follow
My father's footsteps.\(^\text{13}\)

There are several poems in the *Kamo no Chōmei shū*, under the heading *jukkai* or personal grievances, which appear to have been written soon after the death of Chōmei's father. In these poems one can read not only Chōmei's grief at the death of his father and his resentment at not taking his place, but also an awareness of the problem of worldly attachments, an awareness that is clearly Buddhist in its orientation.

Yo wa sutetsu
Mi wa naki mono ni
Nashi hatetsu
Nani o uramuru
Tage ga nageki zo mo

I cast aside this world.
I look upon myself
As one who belongs to it no more.
What should I bear ill-will against?
Who should I lament over?

Or again,

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\(^{13}\) *Ibid*, pp15-6. Kamo no Sukemitsu was an official at the Lower Kamo Shrine. According to the *Hyōshanki*, he was promoted due to a recommendation by Chōmei's father. It was perhaps the fact that Sukemitsu owed his position to Chōmei's father that made it possible for Chōmei to seek support and consolation from him at a time when he appears to have needed it most. See *Kankyō no hito: Kamo no Chōmei*, p 39.
Ukimi o ba
Ika ni sen to te
Oshimu zo to

Hito ni kawarite
Kokoro o zo tou

Standing outside myself,
I ask my own heart
Is it because you wonder what can be done
About this grief-stricken body
That you love it so?

The Emergence of Chōmei as a Poet.

After the shock of his father's death, Chōmei became increasingly involved with composing poetry. The initial impetus for his composition of poems seems in fact, to have come from that unexpected tragedy. In the year 1175, Chōmei took part in the Kikuawase or the Chrysanthemum contest held by Takamatsu-in who, as we noted earlier, was responsible for appointing Chōmei to the fifth rank. This was a contest in which the participants were divided into two parties, with each party being called upon to put out a chrysanthemum with a poem attached to it. The poems were then judged with one side or the other being declared the winner. Looking back at this event years later, in his Mumyōshō, Chōmei recounts an incident that occurred at that time. On this occasion, Chōmei composed the following poem:

*Seki kanuru*
Namida no kawa no
Se o hayami
Kuzurenikeri na
Hito me tsutsumi wa

I am unable to check
The torrent of my tears
Which flow rapidly
Destroying the dyke
That shielded me from the world.

Luckily for Chōmei he had the poem looked at by the Priest Shōmyō, who pointed out that it had one major defect. The word used for the death of an Emperor or Empress is hōzu. Thus Chōmei's use of the word kuzuru, the alternate reading of which is Kamo no Chōmei zenshū, p.15.

Kamo no Chōmei zenshū, p15.
Mumyōshō, p 40.
hōzu, would have been considered inauspicious in the presence of the Empress, and might even appear as an act of extreme insensitivity. Chomei writes that he was deeply grateful for having been saved from making a major faux pas, and that he produced another, more appropriate, poem for the occasion. The point he wishes to stress is that poems which are to be recited at court contests should be thoroughly reviewed in advance by experienced poets.

The priest Shōmyō, who appears to have been Chōmei's mentor, was a poet of some standing. Before he took the tonsure he was known as Fujiwara Chikashige. That he was close to Chōmei's father perhaps accounts for the fact that Chōmei was able to approach him and seek his advice. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that Shōmyō was the father-in-law of the person who served as Head Intendant at the Kamo shrine. If this is so, then it is not impossible that Shomyō was in fact the father-in-law of Nagatsugu, which would make him Chōmei's grandfather. In any case, whatever the nature of the relationship, it is clear that Shōmyō took Chōmei under his wing and served as his guide. He appears again later on in the Mumyōshō, this time counselling Chōmei on a rather different matter. Shōmyō explains the kinds of strategies that can be used to save the situation when a courtier is approached by indiscreet court ladies with poems that have to be answered or completed, and the gentleman finds himself out of his depth and hence liable to be ridiculed.

There is considerable uncertainty about whether or not Chōmei was married and/or was seriously involved with any woman. In the Hōjōki, Chōmei claims that at the age of fifty, when he became a priest, he had no difficulties in giving up worldly life because he had never been burdened with marriage or children. However, some unanswered questions remain. First, the fact that Chōmei is referred to by another title, Kikudaifu.

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16 See Asami Kazuhiko, "Hosshinshū no gentai to zōhō" Chūsei bungaku, 22, November 1977.
17 Mumyōshō, pp 59-60.
18 Hōjōki p 29.
Biographers of Chōmei have suggested that Kiku may be the family name that Chōmei received from his wife's family on account of being an adopted son-in-law. Some Japanese scholars have surmised that the reason why Chomei spent his twenties in his grandmother's home was because he was married either to his paternal grandmother's daughter, that is, his aunt (a not uncommon practice among the aristocracy of that period) or to her granddaughter, that is, his cousin. The reason why Chōmei had to leave his wife's home, they suggest, was his inability to carry on his father's profession and thus provide his family with security and prestige.\footnote{Ibid, pp17-27.}

Among the love poems that appear in Chōmei's collection of poetry, there are some verses which, judging from the headnotes, are based on personal experience. This would suggest that he was involved with women from the time he was a youth. Chōmei's increasingly active participation in court life would have brought him into frequent contact with ladies, all the more so since he was deeply involved in the composition of poetry and its recitation at poetry contests. However there is no real evidence that points to the presence of a wife and family in Chōmei's life.

When Chōmei was in his twenties, several disasters hit the capital. Chōmei writes about these at length in the \textit{Hōjōki},\footnote{\textit{Kankyo no hito : Kamo no Chōmei}, pp 54-55, pp 124-5.} though, as we shall see, the natural disasters of that period, together with the unsuccessful attempt at shifting the capital to Fukuhara, find a place in his work only as a means to illustrate the ephemeral nature of human life and human dwellings, and to set this in contrast with the life that Chōmei chooses for himself by living in a ten-foot-square hut in Hino. Chōmei makes no mention of the political upheavals that took place over the same period of his life.\footnote{These were the Hōgen and Heiji Insurrections of 1158 and 1159 respectively.}
Chōmei's Training in the Way of Poetry.

Chōmei's first literary work, his collection of poetry, the Kamo no Chōmei shū, is believed to have been completed in the year 1181, when he was twenty-six years old. It contains a hundred and five poems, most of which are divided into the prescribed dai or topics such as spring, summer, autumn, winter, love, miscellaneous and so on. But there are also poems that are more personal in nature, some of which have already been quoted.

Several poems in this collection, written in Chōmei's youth, appear ironical when viewed from a knowledge of the course that Chōmei's life would take thirty years later. For instance, the following poem, which he composed on "going to a temporary dwelling in a place in the mountains" is striking for Chōmei's inability at the time to conceive of a life spent in solitude and austerity, something that he later idealizes and celebrates in his Hōjōki:

*Kari ni kite*  
Coming upon this make-shift abode,  

*Miru da ni taenu*  
Painful even to behold,  

*Yama sato ni*  
I wonder who passes  

*Tare tsurezure to*  
Lonely days and nights  

*Ake kurasu ramu*  
In these desolate mountains.22

Or again, the poem which he wrote while "facing the moon and forgetting the West" is a foretaste of that tension between the 'religious' and the 'mundane' which marks Chōmei in his later life:

*Asa yū ni*  
I had believed that  

*Nishi o somukaji*  
At no time of day or night  

*To omoedomo*  
Would I turn my back on the west  

*Tsuki matsu hodo wa*  
But while waiting for the moon to rise  

*E koso mukawane*  
I failed to face the west.23

22 Kamo no Chōmei zenshū, p14.  
23 Ibid, p16.
It is not clear what inspired Chomei to put out his own collection of poetry at this time. It has been suggested that he was encouraged to do so by Kamo no Shigeyasu, who was the Head Shinto priest of the Upper Kamo shrine and a poet of some repute. Chōmei appears to have been a frequent participant in poetry contests that Shigeyasu organized at the shrine and in his home. Shigeyasu also included four of Chōmei's poems in a collection of poems called the *Tsukimōdeshū*, which he put together in the year 1182. It is possible that Chōmei was encouraged by this support to bring out his own collection of poems, and he included the four poems that appeared in the *Tsukimōdeshū* in his own collection, the *Kamo no Chōmei shū*.24

Apart from the help that Chōmei received from the priest Shōmyō and Kamo no Shigeyasu, his most important relationship in the world of poetry was with the poet/priest Shun'e. It is from Chōmei's account in the *Mumyōshō* that we learn of the special bond of teacher and pupil that existed between him and Shun'e. Chōmei writes:

> The first words that Shun'e uttered to me after we had tied the bonds of a teacher-pupil relationship in poetry were, "Poetry is based primarily on traditional practice. If you rely on me as your true teacher, never forget this. I talk to you in this way because I believe that you will certainly be one of the poetic geniuses of our times. Never, never, even if you reach a stage when people recognize you, should you ever believe that you have reached perfect enlightenment in the art and thus give yourself airs".25

Shun'e was born in 1113, and was forty two years Chōmei's senior. He became a priest at the Tōdaiji at an early age, but returned to the capital where he spent at least forty years as an important member of the poetic world. One of his most significant contributions to the development of poetry was the establishment of a poetry circle which he called the Karinen or the Grove of Poetry. He organised monthly gatherings

24 *Kamo no Chōmei shū*, p 54.
in which literary figures came together to discuss and recite poetry in his own home. Shun'e tried to bring together poets who espoused different poetic styles and who were of varied status and ranking. These included middle and low ranking courtiers, men of the warrior class, Shinto officials, Buddhist priests and women who served at court. The karin' en appears to have been active for at least twenty or more years.26 Chōmei's Mumyōshō is in large part a recording of various stories and episodes that were the subject of conversation in poetry gatherings at Shun'e's home.

The Beginnings of Poetic Success.

When Chōmei was in his thirties, he was forced to move out of his ancestral home into a place which was far less luxurious. Chōmei writes about this in his Hōjōki. He explains that he lived for a long time in the house of his father's mother, but that he lost "his position" and fell on hard times. When he was in his thirties he built after his own plans a little cottage which was barely one tenth the size of his ancestral home.27

Yanase Kazuo has suggested that Chōmei perhaps lived in his father's mother's house because his father, not being the eldest son of the family, had inherited the mother's rather than the father's home. Yanase believes that it was the death of his father which forced Chōmei to move out of his grandmother's home.28 As I mentioned earlier, there are also suggestions that Chōmei might have been married to a girl from his paternal grandmother's family. Whatever the reasons, it is clear that the move from his grandmother's home was the first step towards a life of greater frugality and restraint for Chōmei.

And yet, despite Chōmei's failure to inherit his father's post in the Kamo shrine and to continue to live in comfort in his grandmother's home, he seems to have been

26 See Kono Michiko, "Chōmei to Shun'e: Shiteikankei ni itaru katei", Kamo no Chōmei no kenkyū, Nishō gakuen daigaku bungakubu, kokunbungakuka, June 1976.
28 Kamo no Chōmei no shinkenkyū, p 7.
actively involved in court life and to have had many opportunities to prove himself as a poet of distinction. One important event which Chōmei recounts with pride in the *Mumyōshō* is the inclusion of one of his poems in the Imperial Anthology, the *Senzaishū*, compiled in 1188 by the grand old poet of that period, Shunzei. Chōmei writes:

> When one of my poems was included in the *Senzaishū*, I expressed my pleasure thus: "I did not come from a family that had practised the art of poetry over generations. Nor was I a great composer of poetry. Furthermore, I was not recognized as an outstanding man of accomplishment of my time. Under these circumstances, it was a great honour for me to have one of my poems included in the *Senzaishū*."

The poet and musician Nakahara Ariyasu, Chōmei tells us, was deeply impressed by Chōmei's humility and his lack of resentment against people much less worthy than himself who had had several of their poems included in this anthology. It is clear that Chōmei was now in a situation where he received instruction from a number of older poets, not only about the particular elements that went towards the composition of good poetry, but more importantly, on the ways of disciplining the mind in order to master the Way of Poetry (*waka no michi*).

Another interesting episode which Chōmei writes about in the *Mumyōshō* took place a year after his poem was included in the *Senzaishū*. This incident tells us much about Chōmei's enthusiastic involvement with the poetry circles of his time, and his growing self-confidence as he achieved success. Chōmei writes that he composed the following poem at the Mitsuyuki poetry contest at the Kamo shrine under the heading 'moon':

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29 *Mumyōshō*, p 45.
Ishikawa ya
Semi no ogawa no
Kiyokereba
Tsuki mo nagare o
Tazunete zo sumu

In Ishikawa
The little brook of Semi
Is so pure that
Even the moon seeks it out-
Therein to live and shine.

The poem failed as the judge, priest Moromitsu, declared that it was unlikely that any river with the name Semi existed. However, unsatisfied with the judgement, Chômei had the poem looked at again by the Priest Kenshô, who left the matter undecided as he too could find no precedence for the use of the phrase 'semi no ogawa'. But he did not dismiss the poem altogether, because he felt that it flowed felicitiously; instead he urged Chômei to make inquiries with people who lived in that region to find out whether such a river actually existed. On meeting priest Kenshô again, Chômei explained that semi no ogawa was in fact another name for the Kamo river, and that it was mentioned in the annals of the Kamo shrine. Chômei notes with pride that he was the first person to introduce and legitimize the use of the phrase semi no ogawa in poetry, and that it was not long before poets like Takanobu and Kenshô used the phrase in their own poems. The final sanction for his poem came when it was included in the Shinkokinshû several years later.30

Around the year 1186 or 1190 Chômei appears to have gone on a journey to Ise. There is considerable debate as to when the event actually took place and why Chômei undertook this journey.31 He wrote an account of his trip there, a kind of travelogue called the Iseki which unfortunately has been lost. What remains are some of the poems

30 Mumyōshô, pp 43-5.

31 Yanase Kazuo links the journey with the disgrace that Chômei falls into from playing the secret melody, the takuboku as recorded in the Bunkidan and dates it as the year 1186. Cf. Kamo no Chômei no shinkenkyû, pp15-6. Tsuji Katsumi on the other hand believes the journey to have taken place in the year 1190. Cf. Tsuji Katsumi, "Kamo no Chômei Ise gekô renjikô, Koten ronsô, December 1982."
that he composed at the time with their headnotes which found their way into works such as the *Fubokuywakashō*.

Among the many poems that he composed on this journey, there are some which already indicate his increasing involvement with the Buddhist teachings. An example is the following poem, composed while visiting the shrine of Tsukiyomi (another name for the god of the moon) in Ise:

Yami fukaki  
In your pledge  
Ukiyo o terasu  
To illuminate this fleeting world,  
Chikai ni wa  
Plunged in darkness  
Ware madowasu na  
Do not delude me  
Tsukiyomi no kami  
Oh god of the moon!  

Here Chōmei seems to allude to a notion that had gained popularity in Japan at the time, namely, that the Japanese gods (kami) were the manifest traces (*suijaku*) in Japan of the Buddha who had appeared in India (*honji*). The Buddha who had pledged to illuminate the deluded world appears in this poem in the form of the Japanese god Tsukiyomi no kami.

To another poem Chōmei appended the following headnote, "When I was in Futami, I heard that people were getting together in the vicinity to perform the ten kinds of ceremonies of the Lotus Sutra. I felt that I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to be present for the ceremony. I sent word to that effect but someone, possibly the patron who was sponsoring the ceremony, declined and told me to stay away". Chōmei then composed the following poem:

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32 *Kamo no Chōmei zenshū*, p 36.
Much of the evidence in the Mumyōshō and the Kamo no Chōmeishū suggests that by the time Chômei was in his thirties he had established himself as a poet of some repute. There was also another area of the arts to which Chomei devoted his energies—the Way of Music(kangen no michi). In the Mumyōshō Chômei speaks of the advice given to him by Nakahara Ariyasu. He points out that what he had been taught by Ariyasu constituted extremely valuable esoteric teachings in the Way of Poetry, and that he had been instructed with such openness because Ariyasu wished Chômei to follow his footsteps in the Way of Music.34 Speaking of Chômei, the Jikkinshô says, "In recent times there was a person who belonged to a family of officials who served at the Kamo shrine called Kikudaifu Chômei. He was renowned amongst people for his music."35 The Bunkidan takes for granted his activities as a musician and points out that Chômei was highly regarded in the field of poetry as well. It also mentions the fact that Chômei was instructed in the art of music by Ariyasu and had the reputation of being a sukimono. 36

33 Ibid, pp 40-1. The phrase minori no sue suggests the degeneration of the Dharma, the onset of mappō, a period in which people practice exclusiveness and discrimination even in matters to do with the Buddha's Dharma.

34 Mumyōshō, pp 45-6. Ariyasu came from a family of musicians and was a master of the biwa, the yokobue, the taiko and the koto. He had established himself as a man who had mastered a wide range of musical instruments and techniques, and it was in recognition of this that he was put in charge of the Imperial Court Music Hall in 1194. However he did not live to enjoy this position for long: he died sometime in 1195.

35 Jikkinshô, p 91.

36 Bunkidan, p 6.
Ariyasu's desire to adopt Chōmei and have him succeed in his line does not appear to have materialized. Indeed, the death of Ariyasu must have been a serious blow to Chōmei's musical ambitions. By 1191 his friend Shōshin, with whom it is possible he had travelled to Ise, died. The priest Shōmyō and his teacher Shune had died a little earlier. Most of the people who had guided him at a time when he was aspiring to be a poet of some consequence had passed away. We know very little of Chōmei's activities during this period. What we do know is that he took part in the Ishikiyomizuhachibata poetry contest at the Wakanomiya shrine on the third day of the third month of the year 1191. The main organiser of this contest appears to have been Minamoto Mitsuyuki, and the judge was Monk Kenshō. Both poets had been present at the time when Chōmei had recited his poem semi no ogawa at another poetry contest organized by Mitsuyuki. The participants at this meeting were followers of the Rokujo style of poetry, and belonged mainly to the middle and lower rungs of the aristocracy or the priesthood. Though not amongst the most highly acclaimed poets of the day, thirteen of the thirty-two present had their poems included in the Senzaishiū. On this occasion Chōmei presented three poems that were pitched against the poetess Jijū. Two of his poems were declared winners, while the third bout ended in a draw.37

Chōmei's Participation in Poetry Contests and in the Compilation of the Shinkokinshū.

From the year 1200, when Chōmei was in his mid-forties, his name reappears in all the major poetry contests of that time. The single most important figure who was responsible for encouraging Chōmei and for providing him the patronage he needed at this time was the cloistered Emperor Go Toba. From 1198, after entering the cloisters, Go Toba-in devoted his energies not only to politics and military affairs but plunged whole-heartedly into promoting the arts, particularly Japanese poetry. Owing to his

37 Kankyō no hito:Kamo no Chōmei, p169.
special interest in the art of composing a hundred poems (hyakushū), he called for a series of hundred poem sequences in the year 1200. The first series that he commissioned was around the seventh month and was commonly known as the Go Toba-in shodo hyakushu or The Ex-Emperor Go Toba’s First Hundred Poem Sequences. Twenty three poets participated in this event. The second hundred poem sequence was commissioned later that year and was on a less grand scale, with only eleven participants. Among these, apart from Go Toba-in himself, were Jien, Chōmei, the Lady Kunaikyō and Minamoto Ienaga. This occasion was known as the Go Toba no in saido hyakushu or The Ex-Emperor Go Toba’s Second Hundred Poem Sequences. The success of the first had probably spurred him on to holding the second, and this time he included some poets like Chōmei, who were talented but of relatively inferior status.

In that year Chōmei appears to have taken part in several other poetry contests. On the thirtieth day of the ninth month he participated in the twenty fourth poetry contest sponsored by Go Toba-in, in which Shunzei was the judge. Three poems composed by Chōmei on this occasion have come down to us. On the first day of the tenth month he took part in another poetry contest in eighteen rounds, again organized by Go Toba-in. Chōmei presented three verses, of which one was declared a draw while the other two were losers. On the eighth day of the twelfth month, the Minamoto Michichika poetry contest took place. Only one poem composed by Chōmei on this occasion survives. On the twenty eighth day of the twelfth month the Ishikiyomizu yashiro utaawase was organized by Minamoto Michichika, who also served as judge. Chōmei presented five poems: four were winners and one was a draw.

Shunzei’s son Fujiwara Teika was present at the first, the second and the fifth of the five poetry contests mentioned above. Although he and Chōmei were almost the same age, they differed greatly in their ranks and in their standing as poets. Teika appears to have been keenly aware of Chōmei’s inferior status. In his diary the
Meigetsuki, there is an entry for the sixteenth day of the third month of the year 1201 in which he writes that although Chōmei belonged to the fifth rank he was a person of such humble origins that he should be taken as belonging to the sixth rank.\textsuperscript{38} Or again, speaking of the first of the contests mentioned in the previous paragraph, which took place in the northern wing of the cloistered Emperor's palace in the year 1200, he notes that Chōmei took his place alone (because he was the only one present who belonged to such a low rank) away from the upper echelons of the nobility and the warriors.\textsuperscript{39} Chōmei was in the somewhat contradictory position of being specially favoured by the cloistered Emperor because of his talent in poetry and his devotion to it, while at the same time being separated from his colleagues at the Bureau of Poetry and from other higher ranking courtiers due to his inferior status.

In 1201, Go Toba-in envisaged the production of an Imperial anthology that could match the \textit{Kokinwakashū}: the result of his plan was the compilation of the \textit{Shinkokinwakashū}. Go Toba-in reestablished the Bureau of Poetry (\textit{wakadokoro}) in the seventh month of that year with the express purpose of organizing the compilation of the \textit{Shinkokinshū}. He thus revived an institution that had been inactive for two and a half centuries. Among those who were appointed as officials (\textit{yoriudo}) were men of high rank such as the Regent Fujiwara Yoshitsune, the Minister of the Centre, Minamoto Michichika, and the Tendai Head Abbot Jien. Below them in rank were Fujiwara Ariie, Fujiwara Ietaka, Fujiwara Sadaie (Teika), Fujiwara Masatsune, Minamoto Michitomo, Minamoto Tochika, Jakuren and Shunzei. Minamoto Ienaga was placed in charge of the Bureau. Within eight months some more poets, of lower rank, were added to the Bureau of Poetry. These were Fujiwara Takanobu, Fujiwara Hideyoshi and Kamo no Chōmei. While still being required, along with Fujiwara Takanobu and Fujiwara Hideyoshi, to occupy a special seat at a lower level and separate

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Ibid}, Vol I, p 225.
from the high ranking officials, Chômei’s inclusion as an official in the Bureau of Poetry was an index of the honour bestowed on him by Go-Toba in; certainly, Chômei plunged himself into his work with considerable dedication. In his diary, Minamoto Ienaga writes:

After becoming fatherless, Chômei stopped interacting with people at the shrine and went into complete seclusion. But on being summoned by the Emperor on matters pertaining to poetry, he came up to the palace and soon became an official in the Bureau of Poetry. After this he contributed poems in the various poetry gatherings. He took to working day and night with great diligence and would never leave the Bureau.40

On the fifteenth day of the eighth month of the year 1201, Chômei took part in a poetry contest held at the Bureau of Poetry. One of the poems that he composed on this occasion, on the topic, "the moon at dusk deep in the mountains" deserves special mention. The poem is as follows:

Yomosugara All through the night.
Hitomi miyama no Alone in the mountain depths,
Maki no ha ni I gaze at the autumn moon
Kumoni mo sumeru That was clouded by the pine leaves,
Aki no yo no tsuki Now at dawn it shines through clearly.

The poem was declared as being absolutely first rate (motomo yoroshii). That the atmosphere depicted in the poem was later to become one that Chômei had to live in is not without irony. Chômei himself speaks of the unexpected turn his life takes by alluding to this poem later in his life.41

40 Minamoto Ienaga nikki zenchûkai, p104.
41 Kankyô no hito: Kamo no Chômei, p182. Ienaga quotes this poem as well as Chômei’s allusion to it in a subsequent composition, in his diary the Minamoto Ienaga nikki. Cf. Minamoto Ienaga nikki zenchûkai, p109.
Among the poetry contests that Chômei attended in the year 1202 was the *Eigu utaawase*. The *eigu* was a meeting held in memory of a famous poet. The men and women who attended the gathering paid homage to the memory of the poet by composing poetry and drinking sake together. In the *Mumyôshô* Chômei describes one such monthly gathering at the home of the Minister of the Centre, Minamoto Michichika, where Chômei composed the following poem to the title, "the moon and the old temple":

- **Furinikeru**
- **Toyora no tera no**
- **Enohaini**
- **Nao shiotama o**
- **Nokosu tsuki ka na**

In the Enoha well  
Of the Toyora temple  
Grown ancient over the years,  
The moon leaves behind  
Its glittering pearls unchanged.

Chômei tells us that when Shunzei heard this poem he could not help but be impressed, and remarked, "This poem has truly been constructed with great elegance. I too had thought of using the phrase 'toyora no tera no enohai' at an appropriate occasion, but alas, I have been beaten to it by you". Chômei explains that the phrase was taken from a *saibara*, a kind of popular folk song, and that it was known to everybody, but that he was the first person to have thought of using it within a poem. He notes with pleasure that later on Teika emulated him, using the phrase in one of his own poems. Through these stories Chômei suggests that, increasingly, his poetry was being taken seriously by even the most highly acclaimed poets of the day. Whether or not this was so, it is significant that Chômei makes such a claim.

Another interesting event that Chômei writes about in the *Mumyôshô*, occurred on the twenty second day of the third month in the year 1202, at a time when, as Chômei says, "I used to spend all my time at the palace." Go Toba-in organized a poetry

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42 *Mumyôshô*, p 61.  
contest in which he ordered everyone to compose six poems using three different styles of poetry (santai). According to Chômei, the prescribed form was that poems composed on the subjects spring and summer had to be weighty and large, on autumn and winter slender and light, on love and travel elegant and graceful. Many poets were daunted by the Ex-Emperor's request, and even poets of some consequence like Fujiwara Ariie and Masatsune, both compilers of the Shinkokinshû, stayed away, feigning sickness. Even Teika, in his Meigetsuki, expressed the view that this was a rather unreasonable request on the part of Go Toba-in. In the end only six poets participated in this gathering. They were Yoshitsune, Jien, Ietaka, Jakuren, Teika and Chômei. Judging from the fact that among the poems that Chômei composed that night five were later included in the Shinkokinshû, Chômei appears to have been a success at this unusual gathering.

Another memorable event in Chômei's life as a member of the Bureau of Poetry was his excursion on the twenty fourth day of the second month in the year 1203 to see the cherry blossoms at the palace, together with other members of the Bureau. In his Meigetsuki Teika notes that although he had been on an excursion to view the blossoms the previous day, he went again when invited by his fellow poets Ietaka and Masatsune. He mentions that Chômei was present as well. The expedition was a pleasant one, in which members of the party composed waka and renga and broke off branches of cherry blossoms which they attached to their poems. On the way back, everyone felt in the mood for a music concert, and so Masatsune played the flageolet while Ienaga and Chômei played the flute. Teika goes on to recount that when Emperor Go Toba heard about the excursion of the previous day, he organized another cherry blossom viewing party. Chômei was part of this august gathering as well, and he had occasion to compose poems with the other courtiers while sitting under the blossoms. In view of what Teika had remarked about Chômei's inferior rank, this occasion to mingle with

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important men including the Emperor was a singular honour for a relatively low-ranking poet such as Chômei.

This period was perhaps the high point of Chômei's poetic life. He took part in all the major poetry contests of the time and worked without respite in the Bureau of Poetry to help with the compilation of the *Shinkokinshû*. Go Toba personally supervised every detail of the production of this anthology. For instance, when the compilers had the whole manuscript ready on the twenty fourth of the fourth month, the Emperor went through the collection meticulously, suggesting corrections and re-arrangements. Chômei thus had the unusual opportunity of working in close association with someone as exalted as the Emperor.

The last record of Chômei's participation in the activities of the court is on the thirteenth day of the eleventh month when he attended the ceremony at the Bureau of Poetry to celebrate Shunzei's ninetieth birthday. Chômei was among the poets who composed a poem to pay homage to the doyen of *waka*. However, this world of refinement and elegance which Chômei had steeped himself in came to an end the following year when he left the Bureau of Poetry, became a priest, and moved away from the capital.

The Move to a Life of Seclusion.

According to Chômei's own account in the *Hôjôki* he became a priest in the spring of his fiftieth year:

> From the beginning, as I had no wife or child I had no ties that would make abandoning the world difficult. I had no rank or stipend - what was there for me to cling to?\(^{45}\)

Chômei does not mention the specific circumstances which led to his taking the tonsure. He merely refers in a general way to a life full of misfortunes and bad luck, and points

\(^{45}\) *Hôjôki*, p 29.
out that it was his recognition of the essential frailty of worldly life that made him turn his back on it. It is from the accounts of Ienaga and the author of the *Jikkinshō* that we know that Chōmei's failure a second time round to move into his father's position at the Kamo shrine was the immediate cause of this departure.

There is no account which records the exact year when Chōmei took the tonsure. We can accept the spring of 1204 as a fairly accurate date, however, because from that time onwards Chōmei's name no longer appears among the list of participants at poetry contests. His name is conspicuously absent among those who celebrated the completion of the *Shinkokinshū* project on the sixth of the third month in 1204.

In the *Hōjōki*, Chōmei says that after taking the tonsure he spent five fruitless years in the mountains of Ōhara. Ōhara had come to be a haven for many Buddhist priests and recluses who wished to escape from the highly institutionalized environment at Mount Hiei. Many priests came down to Ōhara, at the foot of Mount Hiei, to lead a rather different kind of religious life - one in which music and poetry played an important part. In the *Senzaishū*, for instance, there is a poem by Chikanori who says that he composed the following poem, together with other priests, while living in seclusion at Ōhara. The dai or topic of the poem was capturing the spirit of the end of the old year in an atmosphere of seclusion.

\[
\begin{align*}
Miyako ni te & \quad \text{In the capital we bustled about} \\
Okuri mukau to & \quad \text{Bidding farewell to the old} \\
Isogishi o & \quad \text{And ushering in the new year,} \\
Shirade ya toshi no & \quad \text{But now the year ends} \\
Ima wa kurenan & \quad \text{And passes by unnoticed.}^{46}
\end{align*}
\]

We do not know whether Chōmei made any friends during his period in Ōhara, or whether he had the opportunity to take part in such poetry gatherings, which, given his life-long interest in poetry, would have had great appeal for him.

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46 *Kokkataikan*, no 475.
There was one person, an old friend of Chōmei's, who may have been instrumental in Chōmei's choice of Ōhara. This was the priest Zenjaku. His name before he became a priest was Fujiwara Nagachika. He held a high position at court, but took the tonsure in 1188, when he was only in his mid-twenties. He later became a disciple of Hōnen and came to be known as Nyōren Shōnin. He was popularly known as the holy man of Ōhara. It was perhaps in emulation of Nyōren that Chōmei chose the religious name Rennin, thus incorporating one character from his friend's name into his own. In his last years it was Nyōren that Chōmei commissioned the work called the *Gakkōshiki*, of which more later.

After the five "forlorn" years spent in Ōhara, Chōmei, according to his account in the *Hōjōki*, moved to Hino at the age of fifty-four. Hino was a mountain village about seven kilometres to the south-east of the capital. It was here that the priest Zenjaku is said to have established the temple known as Toyamaín. It seems quite likely that Zenjaku invited Chōmei to build his hut on Toyama. At the bottom of the mountain stood a rather grand temple complex, the Hokaiji. Thus the place where Chōmei built his hut, while being in a secluded spot in the mountains, was not as isolated from human beings as the *Hōjōki* would have us believe.

Even if Chōmei had little social contact after he had moved to his hut on Toyama, there is evidence of his having made at least one more journey into society. In the autumn of 1211, four years after the move to Hino, he went to Kamakura with the poet Masatsune, who had been his colleague in the Bureau of Poetry. It is not clear why Chōmei undertook this journey. But we do know that Chōmei met the shogun Minamoto Sanetomo there. Sanetomo was already, at the age of nineteen, deeply interested in poetry, and was receiving instruction in the art from Fujiwara Teika. Sanetomo had as yet not had the opportunity to meet his teacher, and his first contact with poets who had been involved with the compilation of the prestigious *Shinkokinshū* was with Masatsune and Chōmei. It is interesting that Chōmei makes no reference to
this trip in the *Hōjōki* and describes this period in his life as being entirely free of any contact with the capital and with friends who once shared his own social world.

A document called the *Gakkōshiki*, written by Chōmei's friend Zenjaku (whom we have mentioned earlier), makes it possible to ascertain the exact date of Chōmei's death. Before his death, Chōmei commissioned Zenjaku to compose a *kōshiki*, a Buddhist work written in a literary style and dedicated to the Buddha. The *kōshiki* was believed to bring merit, after death, to the person who had it composed on his/her behalf. Chōmei, however, asked for a *kōshiki* with a difference. He wished to have a *kōshiki* on the moon, a request that lacked all precedent. It appears that Zenjaku did not carry out Chōmei's request quickly enough, and Chōmei passed away before the work was undertaken. Full of repentence, Zenjaku composed the *gakkōshiki* and offered it on the thirty-fifth day after Chōmei's death, with the prayer that the merit acquired from composing this work would be transferred to Chōmei's store of merit and thus help him attain Buddhahood. Zenjaku dates his work the thirteenth of the seventh month in the year 1216. This places Chōmei's death on the tenth day of the intercalary sixth month of that year. The place and circumstances of his death, however, remain unknown.

The decisive turning point in Chōmei's life which marked him from many of his contemporaries at court was his failure to succeed to his father's post and his subsequent renunciation of worldly life. For the most part, in his works, written after he took the tonsure, he ignores those aspects of his life which for him constituted his 'worldliness'. Poetry and music alone are singled out as pursuits that need to be cultivated with devotion and integrated with religious practice. The following chapters are devoted to an examination of the ways in which Chōmei attempts to integrate elements from his 'worldly' past with the spiritual ideals he espouses.

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47 A hand-written text of the *Gakkōshiki* put together from extant manuscripts of this work was very kindly provided to me by Professors Iso Mizue and Mizuhara Hajime.
CHAPTER III

THE IDEAL OF SUKI IN THE HEIAN PERIOD

Introduction

As we have seen in Chapter Two, many writers of the Heian and Kamakura periods addressed the question of how to reconcile their literary work with their commitment to the Buddhist doctrine, of how to resolve a tension, as it were, between what they saw as the claims of 'attachment' and 'detachment'. A range of solutions came to be proposed: Yoshishige Yasutane, for instance, borrowed Po Chü'i's phrase kyōgen kigo (wild words and frivolous phrases) in order to justify the writing of poetry as a means (hōben) that would serve the Buddhist cause. Poets like Shunzei, on the other hand, claimed that the very act of creating verse was tantamount to religious practice. Or again the priest Mujū Ichien, who was actively involved in preaching the faith, sought to give legitimacy to Japanese poetry by resorting to the theory of honji suijaku (original ground, manifest traces).

Kamo no Chōmei, a court poet and Buddhist priest, shared with these writers the concern to reconcile 'artistic' and 'religious' practices. The concept of suki is one that appears repeatedly in his writings as a means of describing and evaluating people in the artistic world, as well as those who have left that world to become recluses in order to follow the path to enlightenment. An examination of Chōmei's use of the term suki in different contexts is central to an understanding of the importance of aesthetic traditions in his works, and of the ways in which these traditions are remoulded by the Buddhist doctrine to which he is committed.
The concept of *suki* was, of course, not Chōmei's creation. In order to understand the way in which this term came to be used in the Kamakura period, and Chōmei's own application of it in a religious context, it is necessary to examine the evolution of the word in the Heian period. In order to do this it may be helpful to extend our enquiry to the related concept of *irogonomi*, which also appears frequently in the literature of that period, and is often used synonymously with the word *suki*.

The term *irogonomi* is formed from the combination of the noun *iro* (love) and *konomu* (to have a fondness for), while *suki* is the noun derived from the verb *suku* (to have a passion and commitment to the pursuit of someone or something). Both terms came to signify a strong inclination to amorous activities pursued with total abandon. In the context of the courtly culture within which these ideals were situated, amorous dalliance was closely connected with the cultivation of refined pursuits such as the composition of poetry. *Irogonomi* and *suki* thus signified not only a keen interest in the game of love, but equally the ability to express amorous concerns through the play of elegant verse. The term *irogonomi* was used not only as an abstract noun to describe these activities, but also as a personal noun, to describe a person endowed with an amorous disposition and a connoisseurship of poetry. The word *sukimono* came to represent a person who could abandon himself/herself to the pursuit at hand, undaunted by obstacles.1 The use of the word *suki* was much less confined to amorous activities alone, and as we shall see later, could easily be extended to other activities as well.

The terms *irogonomi* and *suki* were closely linked with a broader aesthetic ideal of the Heian period, *fūryū*. As mentioned earlier, this hedonistic ideal of Taoist origins placed particular emphasis on enjoying amorous relationships, drinking liquor, composing poetry and playing music. *Irogonomi* and *suki*, I would suggest, are

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1 Ōno Susumu has suggested that *suki* in the Heian period was quite close in meaning to the modern Japanese word *suki*. It signified an unbridled flow of emotions towards a particular object or person and reflected a sense of pure enjoyment which was free of moral constraints. See Ōno Susumu, "Ōcho bungaku no kotoba", *Nihon bungaku kenkyū*, Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 11, pp 50-51.
subsets of this larger category furyū, and appear to have been used to portray different combinations of the qualities that made up this ideal. They could perhaps be said to represent the working out of the ideal of furyū 'on the ground'.

The Elaboration of the Ideal of Irogonomi in the Tales of Ise

The word irogonomi appears for the first time in the writings of the Heian period and is the Japanese rendering of the Chinese word hao se (kōshoku). In its basic sense the Chinese term represents a fondness for sex. Chinese Confucian ethics saw hao se as being diametrically opposed to virtue, a basic desire that had to be controlled. In the Confucian analects for instance we have the statement, "I have never seen anyone love virtue as much as they love sex". Indeed hao se was seen as a kind of disease that sometimes could not be avoided. In Mencius, the king confesses "I have one shortcoming. I am given to amorous activities." In Japan on the contrary, no well codified system existed which condemned these activities. Indeed, as we shall see, amorous adventure became an important aspect of Heian courtly life. However, it was within the context of other courtly values such as refinement and elegance that this aspect came to be valued.

One of the rare examples of outright dismissal of the value of irogonomi appears, interestingly, in the preface to the first Imperial anthology of Japanese poems, the Kokinshū (Collection of Ancient and Modern Times), compiled around the year 905. This work sought to give to Japanese poetry (waka) the prestige and legitimacy in the public sphere that until then had been accorded only to poetry written in Chinese. It was an attempt to create a theory and prescribe a practice for Japanese poetry, adapting for

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2 Lunyu yinde 9,18, Harvard Yenching Institute, Sinological Index Series, Supplement 16, Beijing 1940, p.17.

3 Mengzi yinde IB, 5, Harvard Yenching Institute, Sinological Index Series, Supplement 17, Beijing 1941, p.7.
this purpose Chinese poetic ideals and techniques that were regarded with the deepest admiration.

The *Kokinshū* has two prefaces, one written in Chinese (kanbun) and the other in Japanese. The Japanese preface owes much to its Chinese counterpart. The author Ki no Tsurayuki uses the term *irogonomi* as the equivalent of *kōshoku* of the Chinese preface, and in so doing he takes over the attitude of disapproval for it embodied in Confucian thinking. Speaking about the vigour of ancient poetry represented by the poetic anthology, the *Manyōshū*, and lamenting the decadence of the present, he says:

> But in our present age, only surface brilliance is valued, people's hearts have grown frivolous; they produce nought but frothy poems, inconsequential words. Poetry has fallen into decay and oblivion amongst men and women of fashion and dalliance (*irogonomi*), never blooming forth in proper circles.\(^4\)

Yet, in the actual collection of poems in the *Kokinshū*, as many as five of the twenty volumes of the work are devoted to the theme of love and present such poems as would be exchanged by lovers in private. What this reflects is the great gap that existed between Japanese sensibilities and the Chinese moral ethic.\(^5\)

One of the earliest prose accounts of the Heian period, celebrating the ideal of *irogonomi*, is the *Ise Monogatari* (Tales of Ise). This is an anonymous work completed around the first half of the ninth century which puts together a hundred and twenty five short episodes about the life and loves of the poet Ariwara Narihira (825-80). In form the work resembles a poetic anthology with the poems forming the backbone of the work. However the headnotes that would normally accompany a poem, setting out the

\(^4\) *Kokinwakashū* p.54.

context in which the particular poem was composed, have been greatly expanded and fictionalized here.

Both the hero and the women he gets involved with are presented as being naturally disposed to the pursuit of members of the other sex, and are described as irogonomi. The narrative is structured in such a way that central to it are the hero's attempts to conquer the hearts of the women he desires. Each incident within the *Tales of Ise* highlights the hero's pursuit of a particular woman, his success or failure, the loss of interest that sometimes ensues and then a move to another object that captures his interest. The work focuses on the high points within this progression. There is no sustained narrative that explores the complex psychological states of either the hero or the women that he is involved with. We are presented with irogonomi — men and women — who are caught up in a world composed of amorous sport alone. The reasons for this are readily understood if one considers that the *Tales of Ise* is an expanded version of love poems, many of which appear also in the *Kokinshū*, and like them, chooses to focus only on the notable 'moments' in the trajectory of love.

In one episode in the *Tales of Ise* we are told that the hero was once visiting a lady who was given to amorous escapades (irogonomi) and that perhaps because he did not quite trust her, he sent her the following poem:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ware narade} & \quad \text{Though your affections be ephemeral} \\
\text{Shitahimo toku na} & \quad \text{As the morning glory's flower,} \\
\text{Asagao no} & \quad \text{Gone before sunset,} \\
\text{Yūkage matanu} & \quad \text{Do not loosen your under-sash} \\
\text{Hana ni wa aritomo} & \quad \text{For anyone but me.}
\end{align*}
\]

The episode ends with the woman sending him the following reply:
In another instance, the hero gets involved with a woman whom he knows to be an irogonomi. However this does not diminish his interest in her in any way. Indeed the uncertainty regarding her fidelity renders her even more attractive, and he cannot keep away from her. Unable to see her for a few days, he gives expression to his feelings of suspicion by sending her a poem. These two incidents suggest that the hero is drawn to women who are irogonomi. He finds them a challenge, and while there are hints that association with men or women who are unfaithful may lead to anxiety and insecurity, the implications for men and women of this intimacy with irogonomi are not explored at any length in this narrative.

What is particularly striking in the episodes about irogonomi in the Tales of Ise is the sense of refined sport (asobi) that lies at the heart of romantic relationships. The sophisticated court culture of the times gave expression to this sport above all through poetry. The skill and sensitivity with which feelings were communicated through poetry tempered all amorous relationships. To be a good poet, then, was the pre-requisite for being an irogonomi.

In an earlier story about the hero’s involvement with another woman, we are told that she throws him into a state of confusion by not stating expressly that she no longer wishes to see him, while at the same time making no effort to make the meeting possible. He expresses his concern with the following poem:

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7 *Ise monogatari*, p.169; *Tales of Ise*, p.99.
Aki no ya ni
On nights when I sleep without meeting you
Sasa wakeshi asa no
My sleeves are wetter
Sode yori mo
Than when of a morning
Awade neru yo zo
I have pressed through bamboo grass
Hichi masarikeri
Crossing the fields in autumn.

The text goes on to say that the lady, being an irogonomi, replied:

Mirume naki ni
In this bay
Waga mi o ura to
There is no seaweed.
Shiraneba ya
Does he not know it--
Karenade ama no
The fisherman who persists in coming
Ashi tayuku kuru
Until his legs grow weary?

This poem is full of elaborate puns and ambiguities. The fisherman gathering seaweed, wasting his time in a barren bay, represents the lady's lover who visits her despite rebuffs. But there is a play on the words mirume naki which apart from meaning 'there is no sea weed' implies several other things: 1) I whom you cannot meet 2) you who cannot meet me and 3) I who am not at all worthy of attention. Thus another sense to the phrase can be, "The sorrow I feel because we cannot meet" or "The sorrow I feel because I am a person of no significance". Through her poem, the woman, who is a talented irogonomi, confuses her suitor even further. Is he to read her poem as a rebuff, or is it indeed an expression of genuine self-deprecation?

There are many examples in the Tales of Ise which point to the importance of poetry as a measure of a person's sensitivity and, by extension, his or her value as a person of culture. A man who grew tired of a woman with whom he had been living in the village of Fukakusa recited the following poem:

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8 Ise monogatari, p.159; Tales of Ise, p.91.

9 See Tales of Ise, p.214.
Toshi o hete
Sumi koshi sato o
Idete inaba
Itodo Fukakusa
No to ya narinamu

Were I to leave the house
Where I have dwelt
These years
Might the luxuriant garden
Become a tangled wilderness.

The woman replied:

No to naraba
Uzura to narite
Naki oramu
Kari ni da ni ya wa
Kimi wa kozaramu

If it be a wild field
Then I shall be a quail
Calling plaintively —
And surely you will at least
Come briefly for a hunt.

The man, we are told, was so impressed by her poem that all desire to part with her left him. 10 The success of a love affair could often hinge on the skill with which a lover stated his or her case through poetry.

In spite of the active participation of women in amorous relationships, it was the men who took the initiative in making the women they fancied their own, and the most successful of these came to be renowned as great irogonomi. Another episode in the Tales of Ise takes up a story about a gentleman named Minamoto no Itaru, who is described as having a reputation as the greatest irogonomi in the whole country. On the occasion of the funeral procession of the Princess Shūshi a man drove out with a lady in her carriage. Though they waited for a long time, there was no sign of the coffin. Just as the man was thinking of departing, Minamoto no Itaru came over to the carriage and began to flirt with the lady, whom he imagined to be alone inside. He caught some fireflies and put them inside the lady's carriage in the hope of catching a glimpse of her. The young man who was inside the carriage recited a poem and Minamoto no Itaru replied with another. About the latter's composition, the author says, "For the poem of one reputed to be the greatest irogonomi in the whole country, this was a rather

10 Tales of Ise, pp.148-9; Ise Monogatari, p.232;
mediocre verse." This example reflects clearly, I think, the degree to which the ability to compose good poetry and the skill displayed in amorous overtures had become inseparable.

Another quality that made for the ideal *irogonomi* was his pursuit of his heart's desire despite obstacles and practical considerations. Among Ariwara no Narihira's achievements are his abduction of ladies of high standing like the Consort of the Second Ward, who was in the service of her cousin the Empress; his relentless pursuit of a lady who was loved by one no less than the Emperor; and, perhaps most famous of all, his seduction of the High Priestess of the great Ise shrine.

This tenacity of purpose, this total commitment to the pursuit at hand becomes, as we shall see, the central element in the ideal of *suki* in a later age. However, as Narihira's activities make clear, it is present in the notion of *irogonomi* as well. In another literary work of the same period, the *Taketori monogatari* (*The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*), the heroine, Princess Kaguyahime, who is renowned for her beauty, is wooed in vain by many noblemen. Most of the wooers, seeing that they are unlikely to meet with any success, give up. However, there are among them five high-ranking courtiers, described as the most renowned *irogonomi* of the times, who refuse to abandon their pursuit.

Whenever these men heard of anyone who was in any way attractive — although there was no dearth of such women in the country — they immediately wanted to make her their own. It was not surprising then that in the case of one so exceptional as Kaguyahime, they were so desirous of having her that they even gave up eating, so lost were they in thought of her. They would visit her house every day, but it was to no avail. They would write letters, but received no reply. They would send her sad poems and, even when they knew that it would come to naught, they carried on visiting her home.

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11 *Ise monogatari*, p 166.
heedless of the snow and frost of wintertime and the heat and thunder of the summer months.\textsuperscript{12}

Here we can identify some of the qualities that made for the true *irogonomi* — total dedication to the object of pursuit and the ability to express these feelings with decorous elegance through poetry.

Another important feature of the ideal *irogonomi* appears to have been a harmonious balance between a light-hearted amorous inclination, and a measure of sensitivity to the partner at hand. The *Tales of Ise* have a humorous episode about a woman who was fond of the ways of love (yogokoro tsukeru onna) and wished to meet a man who would love her. As she could not talk about this explicitly, she pretended to have a dream which she described to her three sons. Only her youngest son took her seriously and interpreted it as meaning that she would indeed find a good lover. He thought to himself, "Most men have little feelings for others. If only I could arrange for my mother to meet Ariwara no Narihira." One day he chanced to meet him and told him the whole story. Narihira found it so moving that he went and slept with the old lady. However he did not follow this up with another visit. The old lady was distraught and went to his house and peered in, hoping to catch a glimpse of him. Narihira happened to see her and recited the following poem:

\begin{quote}
Momotose ni \\
Hitotose taranu \\
Tsukumogami \\
Ware o kourashi \\
Omokage ni miyu
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
The lady with grey hair \\
But a year short \\
Of a hundred \\
Must be longing for me \\
For I seem to see her face.
\end{quote}

As Narihira made ready to go out, the lady rushed home, catching herself on the brambles as she did so. Narihira peeped in from a sheltered spot and heard her recite a poem as she prepared herself to sleep:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}
Narihira was so moved by pity that he slept with her again. The story ends with the following statement, "Most men show consideration for the women they love and disregard the feelings of the ones who fail to interest them. Narihira made no such distinctions."

Narihira's consideration for the old woman set him apart from ordinary men, who looked at women solely from the point of view of their own gratification. The great Heian work of a later period, the *Tale of Genji*, has for its hero a person who epitomizes just this quality of sensitivity and thoughtfulness for the feelings of others. Indeed, Genji's treatment of Suetsumuhana after he discovers, to his horror, that she has a pendulous red nose, is not unlike Narihira's in its mixture of bemusement and kindness.

**The *Tale of Genji*: New Dimensions to the Ideals of Irogonomi and Suki**

The *Tale of Genji* owes much to the *Tales of Ise*, in that this work too has as its central theme the life of a dazzling young man and his affairs with numerous women. However there are fundamental differences between the two texts, and these have great bearing on the ways in which Murasaki Shikibu uses the terms *irogonomi* and *suki*. The *Tale of Genji* is by any standards a long and sustained prose narrative, in which the author has the scope to explore the complex and often contradictory nature of love between men and women. We have in this work not only the playful and uncomplicated attitude to love as a sport that is found in the *Tales of Ise*, but also the painful,

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13 *Ise monogatari*, pp 183-4; *Tales of Ise*, pp 110-11.
introspective and often bleak view of love and its tribulations that forms the theme of *The Tale of Genji*’s most important predecessor, the *Kagerō Nikki* (*The Gossamer Years*). One of the most notable features of the *Tale of Genji* is its ability to capture imaginatively the spirit of an age in which amorous sport and aesthetic practices were inextricably linked, while at the same time not losing sight of the fact that there was a price to be paid for this pursuit of love and refinement.

A striking feature of the *The Tale of Genji* is the extensive use of the term *suki* and related compounds such as *sukimono, sukiwaza, sukizukishi, hono suku* and so on to cover a wide range of situations and emotional states, and the confinement of the term *irogonomi* much more clearly to the realm of the purely amorous and sexual.

Murasaki Shikibu uses the terms *suki* and *irogonomi* in a wide variety of situations. There are occasions when, in the use of these terms, the author appears to censure behaviour that is guided solely by amorous impulses. This has led scholars to assert that moral considerations led the author to condemn those who were given to flirtations. And yet there are many other examples which indicate equally her approval of the inclination to amorous sport.

In Murasaki’s work at least, *suki* appears to be a predominantly male ideal, and it is clear that it does not enjoy her unqualified approval. A major theme that runs through the work is the suffering of women who have been abandoned by their lovers and, in extreme cases, the mental derangement of those who become victims of male caprice.

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14 This latter work, written by a lady who was known as the mother of Michitsuna, is her record of her unhappy marriage to Fujiwara Kaneie between the years 954 and 974. It is perhaps the first attempt in Japanese literature honestly to record the disturbed emotional state of a woman whose tenuous marriage with a relatively important member of the Fujiwara clan brings with it extreme insecurity and loneliness.

This is a view that she shares with the writer of the diary Kagerō Nikki. Nevertheless, the thrust of the Tale of Genji is considerably more complex than that. One is conscious of a certain tension in the novel that may have arisen because the author is all too aware that involvement with an irogonomi or sukimonono must ultimately bring pain and a sense of insecurity to a woman. At the same time, she appears to accept the dominant male ideal of her times and indeed was largely instrumental in reinforcing it for the generations that followed.

The heroine of the Tale of Genji, Murasaki, is completely captivated by Genji's great charm and sensitivity. She is fully appreciative of the fact that Genji pays her a great compliment by holding her so dear. After all, he has had success with many ladies of great beauty and talent, and continues to be involved with them. And yet Murasaki is unable to accept completely his other amorous commitments. When Genji approaches middle age he marries the Third Princess out of political considerations. Murasaki frequently expresses her desire to retire from the world by taking the tonsure. But Genji refuses to let her do so, assuring her that although he has known several women, there is no one who means as much to him as she. The passage that follows his discussion of the merits and shortcomings of the ladies he has loved is of particular significance:

As always when Genji was away, Murasaki had her women read stories to her. In the old stories that were supposed to tell what went on in the world there were men who lacked all sincerity (ada naru otoko), men who gave their hearts to many different women (irogonomi), men who practised duplicity (futagokoro aru hito) and about the women who got involved with them, but it seemed to be the rule that in the end the man settled down with one woman. Why should Murasaki herself live in such uncertainty?\(^\text{16}\)

Murasaki, the heroine, is well aware that the stories of old are far removed from reality. She does not expect her desire to have Genji all to herself to materialize in

an age where fidelity to one woman was not the norm. The writer of the *Tale of Genji* comes to terms with this dilemma by creating a hero who stands out from the other men of his times by his ability to establish meaningful relationships with a wide range of women, and by the skill and sensitivity with which he sustains these relationships, that is to say, his constancy and dependability within a polygamous framework. Murasaki Shikibu's other heroes who follow Genji, like Prince Niou and Kaoru, fall short of this ideal. As a lover Kaoru is sincere and well meaning, but somehow he lacks the playfulness and humour that was such an important part of Genji's romantic life, while Niou is altogether too self-absorbed, fickle and inconstant.

It is significant that while the men in the *Tale of Genji* can, on occasion, be praised for their inclination to pursue amorous relationships, no major female character in the book is ever described as a *sukimono* or an *irogonomi*. In the famous discussion about the relative merits and shortcomings of women in the Hahakigi chapter, Tō no Chujō and Genji are joined by two courtiers, a guards officer and a functionary in the ministry of rites. These two gentlemen are described as "great lovers and good talkers"(*Yo no sukimono ni te mono yoku iitoreru o ...*). On the chance arrival of these men, Genji and his companion immediately ask their opinion on the subject under discussion, as a mark of deference to their expertise in the art of love and their ability to express themselves well.17 The two men construct an argument in which their judgement of a woman who is a *sukimono* is stated clearly. The guards officer reminisces about a lady whom he once got involved with. He describes how "everything about her told of refinement. Her poems, her handwriting when she dashed off a letter, the *koto* she plucked a note on — everything seemed right. She was clever with her hands and clever with words." Eventually the officer discovered that the lady was having an affair with another man. He witnessed her exchanging poems and

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playing the *koto* skilfully for her other lover. The guards officer draws the following conclusion from this affair:

Though I had to admit that she had talent, I was very annoyed. It is amusing enough, if you let things go no further, to exchange jokes from time to time with fickle and frivolous ladies (*tada toki doki uchi katarau miya zukae bito nado aku made zarebamusukitaru wa sate mo miru kagiri wa okashiku mo arinubeshi*) but as a place to take seriously, even for an occasional visit, matters here seemed to have gone too far. I made the events of that evening my excuse for leaving her.18

He challenges his listeners to give their hearts to a lady who is given to amorous sport (*sukitawameramu onna ni kokoro okasetamae*) and assures them that such an involvement can end only in damaging their reputation.19 Frivolity and flightiness, then, were acceptable in a woman only if a man wished to engage in a short-term affair which he did not take seriously.

By the same token, the desire to engage in amorous dalliance was not reprehensible in a very young woman, because the assumption was that she would eventually grow out of it and become more steadfast in her affections. In the Suetsumuhana chapter, for instance, the term *irogonomi* is used to describe the daughter of Genji’s old nurse (*ito itaku irokonomeru wakōdo*). The girl, being well-acquainted with the nature of amorous liaisons, knows precisely how to arouse Genji’s interest in the daughter of the Prince Hitachi. She has the girl play on her *koto* so that Genji can hear her. At the same time, she makes sure that she does not play too much lest Genji get a chance to judge her talents and be disappointed. Later, teasing Genji, she remarks on how amusing it is that Genji’s father thinks of his son as being excessively serious — perhaps because he has never seen him dressed for these

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amorous expeditions. At this Genji smiles and retorts that she is not in a position to criticize him. "If this sort of thing requires comment then what are we to say of the behaviour of certain ladies I know"? Murasaki Shikibu goes on to comment, "She [Tayū] did not answer. Her somewhat indiscriminate ways (iromeitari) invited such remarks." 20 Tayū's susceptibility to amorous escapades and the light banter between her and Genji are not matters of great consequence and hence do not meet with serious criticism.

The period of Genji's exile in Suma provides us with another rather similar use of the word suki. The assistant viceroy of Kyūshū is on his way to the capital by boat with his wife and daughters. When they pass Suma the daughters, hearing that Genji is in residence there, begin to blush and sigh, being as they are, young and susceptible (suitaru wakaki musumetachi).21 Genji's reputation among women was obviously such that even mention of him sent girls off into romantic reveries. Here the word suitaru means nothing more than "giddy" or "susceptible", a condition quite acceptable in the very young.

The situation is rather different in an incident from the Aoi chapter of the novel. Genji sets off with his wife Aoi to see the Kamo festival. The streets are lined with carriages and there is no place for their carriage to get into a position which will afford them a good view of the celebrations. At this time a fan is thrust from under a lady's carriage with a message that the lady would relinquish her place for him. Genji wonders, "What sort of adventuress might she be?" (Ika naru suki mono naramu). After an exchange of notes and poems he discovers that it is Gen no Naishi, who despite her age continues to act youthful and flirt as much as ever. In the normal course of things this would not have upset Genji, but he finds the whole exchange in bad taste. "A more


21 Genji monogatari, Volume II, p.195. Suitaru is the euphonic change from sukitaru.
proper lady would have kept the strictest silence, out of deference to the lady with him."22 There is no question that Gen no Naishi's behaviour is considered particularly, unseemly for someone her age: greater maturity and sensitivity to good form are expected of her.

Men who were *sukimono*, on the other hand, were ideal heroes, and it is only on certain occasions that the term was used to signify short-comings rather than qualities worthy of praise. The precise implications of the term seemed to depend on the context in which the men in question engaged in amorous activities. It cannot be denied that Murasaki Shikibu's hero, Genji, would be divested of much of his appeal if he were not portrayed as being irresistible to women and, what is more, if he failed to respond. Too much seriousness (*mamemameshisa*) would only render him dull. In the Yūgao chapter of the book, for instance, Genji's close friend and attendant, Koremitsu, reflecting on Genji's growing interest in Yūgao, expresses the view that "given the fact that Genji was so young and attractive to women, it would be quite heartless and bespeak a certain inadequacy if Genji were to refrain from such amorous relationships" (*Suki tamawazaramu mo nasake naku sōzōshikarubeshi*).

So too the Emperor, Genji's father, seeing him flirt with one of his old ladies-in-waiting, Gen no Naishi, who is described as an "inexhaustibly amorous old woman" (*tsukisenu konomi gokoro*) laughs indulgently and says with a smile;""People often lament that you are wanting in amorous enterprise (*sukigokoro*) but I can see that you have your ways."24

And yet the same Emperor is extremely distressed that Genji is neglecting the Rokujō lady, who is his niece, and reprimands him thus:

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If you abandon yourself to the dictates of your heart and indulge in these amorous affairs you will certainly bring upon yourself the opprobrium of society *(Kokoro no susabi ni makasete kaku sukiwaza suru wa...)*.\(^{25}\)

In this instance the Emperor's criticism flows from the fact that his niece, who comes from a powerful family, is being neglected: abandoning oneself to one's desires is here impolitic and hence best avoided. It is hard to detect in this instance any disapproval of *suki* on moral grounds.

Heian court society, as we have seen, placed great value on refinement and delicacy of feeling, and believed that these qualities were best reflected in relationships between lovers. In the Tamakatsura chapter, Murasaki Shikibu speaks of the local gentry of Hizen who were courting the young Tamakatsura. She describes one of them, an officer from Higo, who was a warrior of considerable power and influence, as follows:

> Within his rough and uncouth heart he still had a little place for refined sensual pleasures and among his avocations was the desire to collect women of beauty in his entourage *(Mutsukeki kokoro no naka ni isasaka sukitaru kokoro majirite...)*.\(^{26}\)

In this instance, the warrior's interest in beautiful women was regarded as the redeeming feature of an otherwise untamed nature. The close connexion between love and refinement is one that is clearly displayed by the *irogonomi* in the *Tales of Ise* and by the *sukimono* of the Genji. It is above all in the domain of artistic activity that these qualities are best displayed. In the second half of the *Tale of Genji*, in particular, the word *suki* comes to be associated more directly with excellence in the spheres of poetry and music.


Suki: Sensitivity and Skill in the Arts

The first signs of a transition in the meaning of the term *suki* can be detected in the latter half of the *Tale of Genji*. While in the earlier sections of the text *suki* signifies an amorous disposition accompanied by a general accomplishment in various spheres of artistic activities prized in Heian court society, in the latter half of the work, the term appears to be used far more narrowly to speak of devotion to a particular art.

In the Akashi chapter, for instance, the father of the lady of Akashi, when pressed by Genji to request his daughter to play the lute for him responds by saying:

> While we are on the subject of lutes, there were not many even in the old days who could bring out the best in the instrument. Yet it would seem that the person of whom I speak plays with a certain sureness and manages to affect a rather pleasing delicacy. I have no idea where she might have acquired these skills. It seems wrong that she should be asked to compete with the wild waves, but sometimes in my gloom I do have her strike up a tune.

The text then goes on to say, "Sukiitareba okashi to omoite..." Arthur Waley translates this as, "He spoke with so much enthusiasm and discernment that Genji was charmed with him." Edward Seidensticker translates it as, "He spoke with such spirit that Genji, much interested...".27

While the theme of Genji's interest in the Lady of Akashi and her father's concern to have Genji accept her is never far away, the use of the word *suki* here, which is translated variously as 'discernment' and 'spirit', has as much to do with the father's sensitivity to music and its traditions as with his desire to paint an attractive picture of his daughter's musical skills for the benefit of Genji. This becomes clear when we look at what follows in the text:

> Genji was so charmed that he pushed the lute towards him. He did indeed play beautifully, adding decorations that have gone out of

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fashion. There was a Chinese elegance in his touch and he was able to induce a particularly solemn tremolo from the instrument.\textsuperscript{28}

In the \textit{Makura no Sōshi}, or the \textit{Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon} as it is known in English, Murasaki Shikibu's contemporary also uses the word \textit{suki}, in the specific sense of artistic excellence. Sei Shōnagon recounts how the Empress one day tested her ladies-in-waiting for their knowledge of the \textit{Kokinshū}. Disappointed by their performance, she invoked the example of the Emperor Murakami, who had quizzed the daughter of the Minister of the Left (who was later to become his concubine) on her knowledge of the poems in the \textit{Kokinshū}. The girl's memory of the poems was flawless and the Emperor was unable to find any fault with her. However, while she was being tested, her father, the Minister of the Left, was thrown into a state of great consternation. He arranged for special recitations of the scriptures and he himself spent a long time in prayer. Sei Shōnagon describes his behaviour as reflecting his devotion to the arts, and finds it very moving.\textit{(Sukizukishiku aware naru koto nari)}.\textsuperscript{29}

From this passage it appears that the Minister's concern for his daughter's fate, that is, her success with the Emperor, as well as the importance he himself attached to her ability to master Japanese poetry, are described as \textit{sukizukishi}. Sei Shōnagon adds that the Emperor, who was present when she related this story, commented that in former times even people of no consequence used to devote themselves to the arts, and that this was quite wonderful\textit{(Suki okashū koso arikere)}. He lamented, moreover, that he himself could hardly hope to have such mastery over poetry.

What this makes clear is that while there remains in the use of the word \textit{suki} a strong association with matters to do with love, it also suggests the idea of total dedication to the pursuit at hand. This sense of the term becomes increasingly important


\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Makura no sōshi}, Matsuo Satoshi and Nagai Kazuko eds., \textit{Nihon koten bungaku zenshū}, 11, Tokyo : Shōgakukan, p.90.
in Chōmei's time. But it is present from very early on, as the following example from the *Tales of Ise* indicates. A young man falls in love with a girl of humble background and meets with opposition from his parents, who send the girl away in the hope that the boy will forget her. But the boy weeps bitterly and eventually loses consciousness for several hours. The author commends his behaviour, saying, "Young people of former times were able to abandon themselves wholeheartedly to grief in matters to do with love (*Mukashi wa wakabito wa saru sukeru mono omoi o namu shikeru*). I wonder if even old men nowadays would be capable of this."30

The examples from the later chapters of the *Tale of Genji* and the *Makura no Sōshi* reflect the changing signification of the term *suki* in the eleventh century. The growing value placed on single-minded devotion to a particular art had much to do with the development of the ideal of *michi*. This ideal became a dominant one in the period when Chōmei and his contemporaries lived and it was at this time that the semantic range of the term *suki* became considerably more limited, perhaps in response to the altered literary and religious climate of the period. The author of the *Tale of Genji*, however, appears to espouse the ideals of an earlier age, in which the pursuit of one *michi* was not a value in itself. Rather it was the ability to skilfully cultivate a wide range of refined pursuits that marked the true man of culture. Prince Niou, for example, who is described as being immersed in the art of blending perfumes, compares unfavourably with Prince Genji:

So that at Court it was as an expert in the blending of perfumes that in those days he[Prince Niou] was best known and it was thought a pity a young man should become immersed in an art that made so little call on his robuster side (*sukoshi nayobiyawaragite suitaru kata ni hikaretamaeri to yo no hito wa omoikikoetari*). And indeed the fact that he allowed himself to be thus identified with a particular

30 *Ise monogatari*, p.168.
distraction showed how different was his nature from that of Genji, who would never have suffered one enthusiasm to eclipse the rest.\(^{31}\)

**Conclusion**

One could argue that the earliest associations of the terms *suki* and *irogonomi* were with purely amorous activities. Gradually these concepts came to incorporate other values, such as refinement and sensitivity, and by extension, skill in the arts of poetry and music. By the Kamakura period, however, the term *irogonomi*, perhaps because of the presence of the word *iro* (love, sex) within it, came to be separated from its close companion, *suki*, and relegated more clearly to the realm of sex and love. The signification of the term *suki*, on the other hand, was narrowed considerably, and it came to refer primarily to the realm of artistic activities. The conscious constriction of the term, however, was achieved in the context of its own history. It is for this reason that even while the concept of *suki* came to be refashioned in the Kamakura period, it by no means shook off the legacy of its Heian past.

It is worth noting, in conclusion, that the various contexts in which the terms *suki* and *irogonomi* appeared in Heian texts had significant consequences for the way in which these ideals were evaluated. At the same time, it is clear that these terms were commonly understood as covering a wide spectrum of meanings, ranging from the purely sexual to highly refined artistic pursuits. In the highly literate culture to which Murasaki Shikibu and her contemporaries belonged, the range and depth that any word had acquired was explored and played on to its fullest degree. It was assumed that readers who belonged to the same élite circle as the writers would appreciate these nuances and the richness of allusions. A final example from Murasaki Shikibu's diary will help to illustrate this.

Murasaki Shikibu relates that Fujiwara no Michinaga, looking at a copy of the *Tale of Genji* that was lying with the Empress, made his usual bantering comments and then wrote a poem on a piece of paper that held some blossoms:

\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{Sukimono to} & \quad \text{It is well known} \\
\textit{Na ni shi tatereba} & \quad \text{To be a sour fruit} \\
\textit{Miru hito no} & \quad \text{But who could pass} \\
\textit{Orade suguru wa} & \quad \text{Or stay his hand} \\
\textit{Araji to zo omou} & \quad \text{Who saw such ripeness there.}
\end{align*}
\]

Here is an elaborate pun on the word *suki*, here meaning both sour and amorous. An alternative rendering of the same poem could thus be:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{As you are renowned} \\
\text{For your amorous ways} \\
\text{I am sure there are none} \\
\text{Who go by without} \\
\text{Having a taste.}
\end{align*}
\]

Murasaki Shikibu keeps up the pun and replies:

\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{Hito ni mada} & \quad \text{Who is it} \\
\textit{Orarenu mono o} & \quad \text{Who can be so glib} \\
\textit{Tare ka kono} & \quad \text{About the reputation} \\
\textit{Sukimono zo to wa} & \quad \text{Of a fruit that} \\
\textit{Kuchinarashikemu} & \quad \text{Has not yet been tasted.}\textsuperscript{32}
\end{align*}
\]

Murasaki is suggesting that since she has not allowed herself to be approached by Michinaga, he is surely in no position to spread the word that she is a woman who offers herself to every man that comes along.

The playful banter, the amorous escapades and the exchange of clever poems which constituted the world of the *sukimono* — that is to say, the world of the Heian aristocracy — underwent fundamental changes in the period that followed. The *sukimono* of this new age came to be a person who was a serious poet or musician, devoted to the norms and traditions of his art. The ideal of the good poet and lover gave way to the more sombre artist devoted to the Way. This is the subject of the chapter that follows.
Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined the aesthetic ideals that governed the lives of the Heian aristocracy through an analysis of the terms irogonomi and suki as they were used in the literature of that period. I suggested that these terms, while being rooted primarily in amorous concerns, came to be associated more and more with artistic pursuits, particularly with Japanese poetry. By the Kamakura period the word suki had come to rest squarely in the realm of the arts, and while it retained a suggestion of its amorous past, it came to be used in a more specific sense — to signify a single-minded devotion to an artistic pursuit, most often that of poetry or music. The word was now written with a set of substitute characters 数 奇 which were phonetic equivalents (ateji). This may have come about in an attempt to disassociate the word from the amorous connotations embodied in the character 好き.

The reasons for this altered signification of the term suki were closely related to the rise of the ideal of michi in the Kamakura period. This ideal demanded that artistic activities no longer be enjoyed as mere pleasures — light-hearted activities to fill up leisure time. They were disciplines to be mastered through rigorous application. The teachings of a particular michi could be passed down only in the manner of esoteric Buddhist practice, secretly, through a close relationship between master and disciple.

By Chômei's time, the artistic practice that had attained supremacy as the most important michi was undoubtedly that of Japanese poetry. One reflection of the new
status of poetry was the need felt by poets to define a theory and practice of poetry. Chōmei’s *Mumyōshō* stems from this tradition — it is an interesting blend of poetic theory (*karon*) and personal anecdotes about famous poets of the kind that appear in other *setsuwa* collections of that period. The term *suki* is central to Chōmei’s conception of the ideal poet. By spelling out the particular qualities and the training necessary to become a *sukimono*, Chōmei presents a kind of manual for those poets who intend to devote themselves seriously to the Way of Poetry.

It is significant that Chōmei wrote the *Mumyōshō* after he had become a recluse. His desire to reminisce about the practice of poetry, and about his own experiences as a poet while at court, indicate the degree of importance he attached to the Way of Poetry. The term *suki* in the *Mumyōshō* is important not only to an understanding of the qualities and practices that Chōmei considers indispensable for the outstanding poet; a study of its reappearance in Chōmei’s collection of religious stories, the *Hosshinshū*, sheds considerable light on the ways in which Chōmei attempts to bring together the Way of Poetry and the Way of the Buddha.

**Irogonomi, Suki and the Way of Poetry**

As I mentioned earlier, by the Kamakura period, Japanese poetry gradually became a specialised discipline, a *michi*, which was to be cultivated by serious poets who made poetry their life’s work. The *irogonomi* of old were nonetheless respected as poets, since their poetry had arisen out of the direct experience of love and all the emotions attendant on it. Moreover, they had the ability to use their poetry in a refined and sensitive manner, as a means of communication between lovers. In the *Mumyōshō*, there is an interesting episode in which the response of the *irogonomi* of the previous age is upheld as worthy of emulation for poets of the present:

A man once received a letter from a lady in which there were two poems. He was expected to send a reply. The poems in question were, however, two love poems from the *Kokinshū*. There was no way he could reply to these and turning over in his mind what he ought to do, he sent back two old poems which adequately expressed
what he wished to say. When he recounted this to a certain old man, the latter expressed his admiration thus, "That was a splendid thing to do. This is the sort of thing that the irogonomi of olden times would have done. What you did unwittingly was in tune with the conventions of the past and is truly a mark of great refinement." ¹

There is a very telling example in the *Mumyōzōshi* which sheds light on the relationship between irogonomi and michi. The *Mumyōzōshi* is believed to have been written around the year 1202, by Shunzei's daughter after she had become a nun. This is however of extremely uncertain attribution. The work is one of the earliest critical writings on the monogatari form which, of course, had been the prerogative of women in Heian times. The writer, in the course of a discussion on poetry and on the way in which poetic anthologies were put together, remarks:

From olden times there have been a large number of women who showed great sensitivity and feeling in matters of love (iro o konomi) and who have mastered the Way of Poetry (michi o narau) and yet not a single woman has been the compiler of an anthology of poetry. How extremely regrettable this is.²

This statement is revealing as the lament of an accomplished lady over the fact that men had appropriated a form of literature in the development of which women had played a vital role. But what is significant in the context of the present discussion is the association of the phrase iro o konomu with the notion of poetry as a michi. The connection is not likely to have been fortuitous. For the author of the *Mumyōzōshi*, refinement and sensitivity in matters of love, implicit in the old ideal of the irogonomi, coupled with the whole-hearted dedication involved in the practice of poetry as a michi, went together in producing the best poetry.

Both in the *Mumyōzōshi* and in the example from the *Mumyōshō*, it is the term irogonomi that retains its older sense of sophistication and sensitivity in the amorous

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¹ Mumyōshō, p 59.
sphere. Poetry serves as the gauge by which this refinement can be assessed. The term suki, on the other hand, while retaining some elements that it shared with the term irogonomi, such as sensitivity and artistic refinement, nonetheless moved away to a new signification — devotion and commitment to a particular artistic discipline.

In the collection of poetic lore called the Fukurozōshi, written by the famous poet Kiyosuke two years after Chōmei’s birth in 1156, the term suki appears in precisely this altered sense. Kiyosuke praises the poets of earlier times saying, "the great poets of old gave themselves up totally to poetry (furuki kasen wa mina sukeru nari)". He recounts how the poet Nōin used to advise would-be poets, saying, "One must work hard at poetry. It is through total devotion to the art that poems of an excellent quality can be composed (Suki tamae, sukinureba shuka wa yomu zo)".  

So too in a collection of poetic lore called the Saigyō shōnin danshō, attributed to the poet Saigyō and written down by his pupil Ren’ei, it is the quality of suki which is identified as being central to poetic composition:

Japanese poetry is the well-spring of suki. One must compose poetry only after having devoted oneself totally to it (Kokoro no sukite yomu beki nari). The Chief Priest of the Great Ise Shrine should devote himself with a pure heart to the cultivation of poetry (Kokoro kiyoku sukite waka o konomu beki nari). This would certainly please the Goddess Amaterasu.

The deep reverence accorded to poetry in this age, as I mentioned in Chapter II, was bolstered by the widely held belief that the Shinto Gods expressed themselves in the form of waka. The Gods were believed to respond favourably to those who devoted themselves to poetry and were skilled at versification. The sections on poetry in a wide range of collections of popular tales (setsuwa) abound with stories of people whose
wishes were fulfilled because they appealed to the Gods in the form of waka. It is worth noting, however, that the gods are said to have responded favourably only to those poets who had devoted themselves to the Way. What would please the Goddess Amaterasu, according to the author of the Saigyō shōnin danshō, is not merely the composition of poetry, but rather, poetry that was born out of a sense of total commitment to poetry and its traditions.

The Veneration of Tradition

By the twelfth century nearly two hundred years had passed since the compilation of the Kokinshū. The poets of this age had centuries of poetic tradition behind them and it was to the great works of the past, the Manyōshū, the Kokinshū and the poetry of China that they turned in their search for models that could be considered worthy of emulation. One of the central features of the development of poetry as a michi was the growing sanctity of the poetic practices of the past. This led to the establishment of a kind of classicism in the world of poetry in which only forms of expression that were modelled on those that had been perfected in the past were recognised as having lasting value.

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5 In the Kokonchomonjū, we are told that the Lay Priest Nōin travelled to the drought-ridden province of Iyo with the lord of that province. The lord of Iyo beseeched Nōin to compose a poem and offer it to the God of Mishima so that his province would be blessed with rain. Nōin complied with the request and, sure enough, the sky was suddenly clouded over, the rains came down heavily and the dried out rice fields turned green again. See Kokonchomonjū, Nagazumi Yasuaki and Shimoda Isao eds., Nihon koten bungaku taikei, 84, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1966, p 158. In a story in the Shasekishū, the lady Koshikibu no Naishi who had fallen gravely ill recited the following poem to her mother:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ika ni semu</th>
<th>What shall I do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ikubeki kata mo</td>
<td>I cannot imagine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboboezu</td>
<td>Which path I should take</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oya ni sakidatsu</td>
<td>As I know not the Way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michi o shiraneba</td>
<td>To precede my parents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Koshikibu's filial piety expressed in the form of this waka moved the Gods who consequently cured her. See Shasekishū, p 227.
In the *Koraifūteishō*, for example, the poet Shunzei remarked that it was in the period when the *Kokinshū* was compiled that what was good and bad in poetry came to be discerned for the first time. Furthermore, the *Kokinshū* was the first anthology which, on the basis of these standards, included only what was good in its collection. Thus, Shunzei claimed, it was enough to venerate and trust the *Kokinshū* as representing the ideal form of poetry. In a similar vein was Shunzei’s famous statement during the poetry contest in six hundred rounds (*roppyaku ban utaawase*), "A poet who has not read the *Genji Monogatari* is a sorry poet indeed," — a statement reflecting the high value placed on mastering the poetry of the past in order to create verse that could be considered worthwhile. It is true that poets like Shunzei, and Teika after him, created a newer and more complex kind of poetry even while purporting to adhere to the norms of the past. Nonetheless, practices that lacked precedence were rarely accepted, and it is for this reason that the word 'new' never lost its strongly derogatory connotations.

1. *Kojitsu* or Ancient Practices.

One aspect of this reverence for the past was the increasing value placed from the twelfth century onwards on recording ancient practices and customs. The diaries that the nobility left behind as well as collections of ancient practices (*kojitsu*) like the *Unzushō* bear testimony to this new concern. In many spheres of artistic activity, there occurred a systematization and compilation of past knowledge. Popular songs were put together for the first time and this resulted in the compilation of the *Ryōjinhishō*. Collections of popular tales (*setsuwa*), many of which put together stories relating to

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6 *Koraifūteishō* p 288.


8 The *Unzushō* was a work by Fujiwara Shigetaka, written between the years 1115 and 1118 in which he recorded ancient court practices.

9 This was a collection of popular songs (*imayō*) compiled by the Emperor Go-Shirakawa (1127-1192).
poetry, music and other artistic pursuits, flourished in this period. In every sphere of literary activity the cumulative knowledge of the past was selected and ordered and came to be looked upon as the necessary foundation for future literary efforts.

In the Mumyōshō Chomei explains that the first words that the poet Shun’e addressed to him after they had tied the intimate bond of a master-pupil relationship concerned the centrality of ancient practices in the discipline of poetry:

The discipline of poetry has extremely important ancient practices (kojitsu). If you rely on me as your true teacher then you must never go against these practices. I am saying this because I believe that you will most certainly be a poetic genius of the future and because you have formed this close bond with me.

Going on to illustrate what he meant, Shun’e spoke about the Minister of Gotokudaiji, Sanesada:

He used to be a poet who was without peer, but as he showed no consideration for ancient practices (kojitsu), he fell behind as a poet. If he had continued the way he had been when he was the Ex-Great Chancellor, showing total attachment to the Way of Poetry, behaving with modesty and refining his work, there would be few poets today who could compare with him. Believing that he has mastered the Way, the poems that he composes these days are written without any concentration and are interspersed with words that are hardly worthy of appreciation. How then can he expect to compose excellent poetry?

This passage is instructive for all that it tells us about the qualities that were considered fundamental to writing good poetry. It was essential to to show "total attachment to the Way of Poetry" and "to behave with modesty". It was also important to work at and to refine one's own work. Writing "without concentration", that is, light-heartedly (the antithesis of suki), as Sanesada had done, would inevitably bring with it nothing but failure. Above all, all serious poets were expected to treat ancient practices with the utmost seriousness. Sanesada's disregard for precedent, his use of "words that are hardly worthy of appreciation", that is, words not sanctioned by the past masters,
accounted for his lack of success as a poet. Speaking of people's favourable assessment of his own work, Shune attributes his success to the high regard with which he has followed ancient practices:

Even now when I compose a poem, I do so in the same spirit as when I first began writing poetry. Also I give my own feelings second place and put my trust in other people's evaluation of my work, even when what they say seems dubious to me. This has been the teaching of the poets of old. I wonder if it is because of this that, although I have reached old age, there is no one who has so far said that I am not a good poet. I do believe that the reason for this is none other than the fact that I have never violated ancient practices (kojitsu).10

2. The Correct Handling of a Given Topic (Dai)

A central poetic concept that became a central part of the critical judgments of utaawase (poetry contests) from the beginning of the eleventh century was that of hon'i. The term came to be generally understood as meaning the "correct handling" of a given topic, "decorum of feeling" toward a subject, "conventional treatment" of an image, and "real significance" of an event or experience. While there was disagreement between the poet Teika and the more conservative poets such as cloistered Emperor Go-Toba about what was meant by "correct handling", there was a consensus that only poetic subjects and expressions sanctioned by the venerable poetic tradition were acceptable. As Brower and Miner write, "There may well have been misanthropes in the Japanese Court who hated both man and nature, but if they were poets, the "decorum of feeling" associated with cherry blossoms required that in poetry they express impatience in waiting for their blooming, delight in their beauty, and distress at their falling. To have

10 Mamyōshō, pp 68-9.
treated such a subject in any other way would only have stamped the poet as an ignorant boor or at best a jokester." 11

In the Mumyōshō, Chomei speaks of the importance of adhering to the spirit or real significance of a topic or dai. This, he suggests, can be done only by paying due regard to ancient practices:

...Now, in order to make sure that we handle the dai of a particular poem with the deepest care, we must understand well the kinds of things that were never said in the poetry of old. For instance, when we compose a poem on the cuckoo we speak in terms of going out into the mountains in search of its voice. But in the case of the bush warbler poetic practice allows us to talk in terms of waiting for it, but we cannot speak of going out in search of it. In a similar way, in poetry, when we hear the cry of the deer, we speak of the feeling of forlornness and pathos it arouses in us but we do not speak of waiting for the cry of the deer. Except for the sake of a particularly brilliant phrase, this kind of thing should be avoided at all costs. Again we go out to see the cherry trees but not the willows; we make poems about waiting for the first snow, but not about waiting for the drizzle or hail. Although we speak in poetry of being so attached to cherry blossoms that we would even give up our lives rather than see them scatter, we do not go so far with the red maple leaves of autumn. If you do not know these things it will appear as though you are ignorant of ancient practices (kojitsu). Therefore when you plan the composition of a poem you should do so on the basis of a careful study of old poems and the nature of the poem itself. 12

3. Rediscovering Objects and Places with Poetic Associations (Utamakura)

By the twelfth century, it was taken for granted that the basic pre-requisite for anybody who wished to be taken seriously as a poet was that s/he pay the utmost regard to the rules and practices that had an established place in the poetic tradition. Interestingly enough, upholding the past meant the idealization of poets who belonged to

12 Mumyōshō, pp 37-8.
an earlier age who were seen as being truly dedicated to their art. These poets from the past were seen by Chômei as being the perfect sukimonod. As we have seen earlier, the poets of the Heian period were irogonomi or sukimonod in a rather different sense. For them the pursuit of poetry was an important part of a life of refinement and grace. Total devotion to one artistic pursuit was by no means part of the ideal life conceived by the courtiers of that period. Ironically, the glorification of the past meant the attribution of the new ideal of suki — total commitment to the Way of Poetry — to the poets of the past. For Chômei the cultivation of suki involved the recovery of a lost ideal.

There are many instances throughout the Mumyôshô where Chômei laments the present and eulogizes the poetic practices of the past. For instance, when he speaks out against the poetry contests of his times, he criticises their disorderliness and derides the poets for their arrogance and their lack of respect for the masters of poetry. This decadence in poetry is explained by Chômei in terms of the inadequacy of the quality of suki among his contemporaries:

The reason for this is that people no longer feel a sense of deep commitment to the Way of Poetry but merely dabble in the art in emulation of others(Kokoro no soko made sukazushite, tada hito mane ni michi o konomu ga yue nanmeri)".13

This is, of course, precisely the charge that, according to Chômei, Shun’e had laid against Sanesada. Poets could, of course, consciously fight against the worst consequences of this fall from the period of grace, as it were, a period when the ideals of refinement and dedication were brought to bear on poetic practice as a matter of course. But the poets of Chômei’s day could hope to approximate the ideals of the past only through rigorous self-discipline and a self-conscious commitment to the Way of Poetry. Throughout the Mumyôshô Chômei recounts tales about the sukimonod he admires, and

in doing so spells out the qualities and practices that make a poet worthy of being called a *sukimono*.

One of the great quests of the *sukimono*, idealized by Chōmei, was to view in person the natural phenomena and places which had been used as images in the poetry collections of the past like the *Manyōshū* and the *Kokinshū*. The assumption was that these images were once immediate and real for the poets who evoked them, but that in the course of time they had become remote and abstract because the places and objects they referred to were no longer part of the poets’ own experience. For the ideal poet therefore, a visit to places which were full of poetic associations (*uta makura*) came to be considered vital if s/he was to use these phrases in a manner that sounded authentic.

In the *Mumyōshō*, Chōmei recounts the story about the *sukimono*, priest Tōren. A group of people, in the course of discussing things of olden days, began to talk about a grass called *masuo no susuki*. No one was sure about the exact nature of this plant. One of the men in the group recalled that he had heard of a holy man in Watanobe who knew what this particular grass looked like. The priest Tōren, who happened to be present, immediately asked the host for a straw raincoat and hat and decided to leave without a word, undeterred by the heavy rain. When his friends asked him where he was going, he explained that he had to go to Watanobe immediately to meet the holy man who could enlighten him on the subject of *masuo no susuki*, a matter that had been troubling him for years. His friends tried to dissuade him from setting out in the rain but he dismissed their suggestions saying, "Is it certain that either the holy man or I will live until the rains stop?" We are told that Tōren was thus able to fulfill his personal desire to discover the true nature of *masuo no susuki*, and that he cherished this knowledge as his secret treasure, passing it on to his disciples. Chōmei praises Tōren, saying, "He was truly a man who was totally devoted to poetry (*Imijikarikeru sukimono nari*)". He explains that *masuo no susuki* was a phrase used by the poet Lord Toshiyori, and that although it could not be ascertained whether or not it had appeared in the *Kokinshū*, in
the discipline of poetry it was common practice to use such old things (furugoto). People no longer knew exactly what these old names referred to. It is in this context that Tōren’s complete devotion to the art of poetry, which drives him to find out about the true nature of masuo no susuki, is exceptional, and it is this quality that Chōmei valorizes in what he calls the sukimono.

Chōmei narrates another story about a man who visited a place called Ide, well-known for its yellow rose and for a particular kind of frog, both of which had become part of the vocabulary of Japanese poetry. The man who had travelled to Ide met an old man there and got talking about the things of old. He asked him why the yellow roses of Ide, which were so famous in Japanese poetry, were nowhere to be seen. The old man explained that the local people (obviously oblivious of the poetical significance of the plant) had pulled it out and mixed it into the soil in the belief that it would produce a better rice crop. He pointed out that Ide was famous for more than just its yellow roses: it was known for a kind of frog known as Ide no kawazu. The kawazu was different from the ordinary frog (kaeru) in that it was darker in colour and was found only in the Ide river. It lived in the water and did not hop around openly on land like common frogs. Above all, when it cried in the deep of the night, the plaintive quality of its voice had a very soothing effect on the mind. The old man urged the visitor to come again without fail in the spring or the summer to listen to the cry of the kawazu.

Chōmei goes on to say that despite having heard this story, he himself had not made the time to go and visit Ide. He laments the fact that his own dedication to poetry falls short of that shown by the priest Tōren, who had made an arduous journey to Watanobe to find out about the true nature of the masuo no susuki:

When I think of this, I feel that in the days to come there will be very few people who, even if some business were to take them to such a place, would care to listen to such sounds as the cry of the kawazu.

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This is because with the passage of time people’s devotion to art (suki) and their sensibilities (nasake) have undergone a decline.\(^\text{15}\)

The poetic lore of the period is full of stories which indicate the degree of seriousness with which poets treated places and objects with poetic associations. As with the yellow rose and the frog of Ide which were valued for their rarity, so too the bridge of Nagara, one of the oldest constructions in Japan, had come to be valued for its age. But even more, it was the fact of the repeated appearance of these objects as images in the poetry of the past that rendered them so venerable.\(^\text{16}\)

4. Sacrificing One’s Life for the Way of Poetry

A poet’s devotion to the Way of Poetry was judged not only by the degree to which s/he followed the rules of poetic precedent, but also by his/her determination to put aside practical considerations in the struggle to perfect his/her art. Sacrificing one’s life to the altar of poetry stood at the pinnacle of this total dedication to poetry, and there are many stories in setsuwa collections that recount those rare instances when poets gave up their lives for their art. In a story in the Mumyōshō entitled Yorizane no suki, Chōmei recounts how "the great sukimono Yorizane" offered five years of his life to the God of Sumiyoshi in exchange for the ability to compose one outstanding verse. Later, ibid., pp 49-51.

In one story in the Fukurozōshi, the poet Sesshin, described as a sukimono, meets the priest Nōin, another great poet. The two establish an immediate rapport and Nōin offers Sesshin a gift on the occasion of their first meeting. It is a piece of wood shaving. Nōin explains that it is his most treasured belonging — this fragment of wood dated from the time when the bridge of Nagara was being constructed. Sesshin is delighted with the gift and in return offers Nōin something wrapped in a piece of paper. When Nōin opens it he finds a dried frog. This was none other than the famous kawazu of Ide. We are told that both of them were deeply moved and, armed with their priceless gifts, they parted company. See Fukurozōshi chūshaku, p 263. The Uji Shūi monogatari tells the story of the priest Yōen who was invited to a Buddhist service and there presented with a fragment of wood from the bridge of Nagara. The next day, the holy teacher Kakuen visited him and asked to be given this piece of wood. When Yōen refused to do so, Kakuen went away fully appreciating why Yōen would not want to part with such a treasure. The narrator of the story concludes, "It is indeed moving to see such devotion to the arts (Sukizukishiku aware narō koto domo nari )." See Ujishūi monogatari, Kobayashi Tomoaki ed., Nihon koten bungaku zenshū, 28, Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1973, p 149.
when Yorizane was taken seriously ill, the God possessed one of the ladies in his house, and explained that he had let Yorizane compose a certain poem of very high quality in answer to his prayer. Yorizane did not recover from this illness as the god now claimed the five years that had been offered to him.  

The *Mumyōshō* also has the story of the Lady Kunaikyō who, we are told, used to forget everything else when she was composing poems, often working day and night without a break. "This person reflected too deeply on poetry and as a result fell ill. At one time she was even on the verge of death because of this." Her father admonished her, saying that everything she did had meaning only if she kept well, and that there was no point in working so hard at poetry that it made her lose her good health. But his counsel proved to be of no avail: we are told that when her death came, it was probably a result of her over-exertion in the pursuit of poetic excellence. Kunaikyō was greatly admired for this by the poet Jakuren, who lamented the fact that her brother, by contrast, took poetry so lightly (*uta ni kokoro o irenu*).  

The *Fukurozōshi* recounts the story of the poet Fujiwara Nagatanō who, when asked to compose a poem under the topic, 'the passing of spring' (*sangatsujin*), at the palace of the Cloistered Emperor Kazan, wrote,

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Kokoro uki
Toshi ni mo aru ka na
Hatsuka amari
Kokonuka to iu ni
Haru no kurenuru
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This year
Is indeed a cruel one.
As the third month
Has but twenty-nine days
Spring has passed already.

When the poet Fujiwara Kintō heard the poem he is said to have retorted, "Do you think spring has thirty days?" His criticism appears to have stemmed from the fact that Nagano had not stuck closely enough to the given topic. Instead of focusing on the idea

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17 *Mumyōshō*, pp 95-6.
of the passing of spring, Nagano had turned his attention to the shortness of the third month that year (twenty-nine days instead of thirty) and lamented this particular fact. Kintō's criticism had such a serious effect on Naga-tō that he fell ill and when Kintō inquired after him, Naga-tō explained that his illness was a direct result of Kintō's criticism of his poem. Indeed, Nagano never recovered from this illness and died shortly afterwards. The story concludes with an admonition, "One must not thoughtlessly criticise the poetry of people who are so totally committed to their art."19

Whether or not Lady Kunaikyō really did die on account of the sleepless nights spent in composing poetry, or Fujiwara Naga-tō as a result of his deep feeling of humiliation, what the above stories clearly signal is the new relationship of the poet to his art. Poetry had now come to be revered to the point where it transcended even the love for life itself.

The Way of Poetry: a Spiritual and Worldly Ideal

The pursuit of poetry as a michi, and the degree of commitment now required in order to prove the seriousness of one's devotion, carried the art of poetry into a realm that was other-worldly. There developed the image of the perfect poet who took no interest in his material surroundings and was willing to sacrifice even his life for the sake of poetry. A fifteenth century poetical treatise by the poet Shinkei, the Sasamegoto, recounts how Teika admonished his son Tameie for his uncaring attitude towards poetry, and related to him the way in which his own father Shunzei composed his poems:

Very late at night, he would sit by his bed in front of an oil lamp so dim that it was difficult to tell whether it was burning or not, and with a tattered court robe thrown over his shoulders and an old court cap pulled down to his ears, he would lean on an arm-rest, hugging a wooden brazier for warmth while he recited verse to himself in an

19 Fukurozōshi chūshaku, pp 245-6.
undertone. Deep into the night when everyone else was asleep he would sit there bent over, weeping softly...20

What emerges in this description of Shunzei's method of composing poetry is not only his complete involvement with poetry but also his total disregard for material comforts and needs. He worked with a lamp which was "so dim that it was difficult to tell whether it was burning or not." He had "a tattered robe thrown over his shoulders and an old court cap pulled down to his ears." While the rest of the world slept, he stayed up deep into the cold night, 'hugging a wooden brazier for warmth', as he recited verse. His poetic activity is clearly marked by great emotional intensity: he "wept softly" through the night as he composed his verses.

In the Mumyōshō, Chōmei reports his teacher Shun'e praising the poet Yorimasa in the following terms:

Lord Yorimasa is a great poetic genius. He is wholly absorbed in poetry and not a moment goes by when he does not think about it — when the cherry blossoms scatter or the autumn leaves fall, even at the mere crying of a bird or the rustling of the wind — no matter whether he is up or lying down, Lord Yorimasa does not fail to turn over in his mind all that he sees and feels and conceptualize it in poetic terms. It is for this reason, I believe, that he composes verses of such exceptional quality.21

In the above description, what is particularly striking is Yorimasa's total absorption in poetry and his total disregard for everything in the outside world, except insofar as it impinges on his poetic concerns. It is for this reason that he is described as a sukimonono.

At the same time, however, the ideal of poetry as a michi could never be entirely a spiritual one. The pursuit of poetry was rooted in social practices in which the utmost value was placed in composing good poetry. The excellence of a particular composition

21 Mumyōshō, p 72.
could be judged only on the basis of the assessment made of it by other practitioners in the field. The only ways in which a poet could measure the worth of his poems was through their inclusion in prestigious anthologies, and through their winning poetry contests. The leading court poets of Chōmei's times strove to be good poets, and they were willing to make the utmost sacrifices in order to perfect their art. At the same time, they expected to see their devotion rewarded through success on the worldly plane. The *sukimono* that Chōmei idealizes in the *Mumyōshō* are deeply devoted to poetry; equally, they are men and women who wish to be recognized, to be immortalized through their poetry.

This desire to be remembered forever for one’s poetry was seen as an index of a poet’s deep involvement with his art. The story of the Lay Priest Dōin in the *Mumyōshō* is an account of a man’s unmatched devotion to poetry. Until the age of eighty Dōin would go on foot every month to the Sumiyoshi shrine and pray to the Gods to help him compose the very best poetry. In a certain poetry contest in which Fujiwara Kiyosuke (the compiler of the *Fukurozōshi*) was judge, Dōin’s poem was declared the loser. At this, he specially made his way up to the judge, and weeping quite openly, complained about the decision. Kiyosuke was at a loss as to how to respond, and later, recounting the incident, professed that he had never before encountered anyone who had taken the matter so seriously.

When Dōin was in his nineties, he used to attend poetry contests and draw up close to the judge, presumably because he was now hard of hearing. As Chōmei says, “The sight of this incredibly old man listening with intense concentration was extremely impressive.” Although the poetry anthology *Senzaishū* was compiled after Dōin’s death, the compiler Shunzei included eighteen of his poems as a tribute to a man who had shown such devotion to the Way of Poetry. Dōin then appeared to Shunzei in a dream and shed tears of gratitude at the honour of being immortalized through his poetry. This dream touched Shunzei deeply and he added two more of Dōin’s poems to
the anthology. This is why, explains Chōmei, the Senzaishū has twenty poems by Dōin.22

Dōin's devotion to poetry was inextricably tied up with his deep concern for success. Both these aspects are present when he expresses his extreme unhappiness over his poem being declared a loser in a poetry contest, and of course, when he sheds tears of gratitude at having eighteen of his poems included in Shunzei's anthology.

Other examples from the Mumyōshō also demonstrate the degree to which poetic excellence and worldly success had become inseparable for the poets of Chōmei's times. Nakahara no Ariyasu, who was Chōmei's teacher in the field of music, offered Chōmei some forthright advice in this regard:

Since you have shown talent in the discipline of poetry you will undoubtedly be invited with some insistence to attend poetry gatherings in all kinds of places. If you compose good poems on such occasions you will probably receive both honour and fame. But while that might well be the case, if you were to go to all sorts of places, flattering people and being treated with extreme familiarity by others, you will certainly be well-known in the realm of poetry, but it cannot fail to be an impediment to your advancement. For a person like you, it would be best if you did not make yourself well-known too much to people. Then wherever you went people would ask,"I wonder who that gentleman is", and this would lead to your being considered a man of great refinement. If one applies oneself to something, one is bound to excel in that discipline and in that case such talents will not go unnoticed. People will hear of them and you will get to attend poetry gatherings of consequence — you might even be able to take a seat behind the highest ranking nobility. This would be real advancement23 in the Way (of Poetry). What possible

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22 Ibid. pp 74-5.

23 The term for advancement used here, sentō, interestingly enough, comes from the term used within court society to describe the rising or advancement of members of the court nobility to the highest official posts on the basis of their family rank and status.
value can there be in mixing with people who are of no consequence and being well-known in such circles?  

It is significant that what constitutes "real advancement in the Way (of Poetry)" for Ariyasu is the possibility of being accepted in the highest echelons of the nobility as a poet of consequence — attending poetry gatherings where they are present and sharing the same mat with them (albeit at the back). Success among people of a low status does not count for much in his eyes. Of course, this is not to say that Ariyasu does not place high value on a poet's calibre. Implicit in Ariyasu's advice to Chōmei is the belief that only a poet who is an outstanding one would have access to poetry gatherings where the nobility of the highest rank participated. But poetic excellence and worldly recognition were inseparable. By definition, a good poet was one who was recognized as such and duly rewarded by the Emperor and notables of the court, people who were not only poets themselves, but also the patrons of poetic activities.

In the *Mumyōshō*, Chōmei speaks of his extreme pleasure at having one of his poems included in the *Senzaishū*:

I did not belong to a family that had practised the art of poetry over generations. Nor was I a great composer of poetry. Furthermore, I was not recognized as an outstanding man of accomplishment of my time. Under these circumstances, it was a great honour for me to have one of my poems included in the *Senzaishū*. When the late Governor of Chikuzen (Ariyasu) heard this [my pleasure at having my poem included in the *Senzaishū*], he said, "I thought you were just saying these things (without meaning them) but I see now that you are in earnest. In that case you will certainly be blessed by the Gods as far your efforts in the Way of Poetry are concerned."  

Chōmei recounts another occasion when at the Mitsuyuki poetry contest he composed a poem in which he used the phrase *Semi no ogawa* — the little brook of Semi. The poem failed because the judge, Moromitsu, felt that such a phrase could not

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24 *Mumyōshō*, pp 45-6.
be used, given that no river by that name actually existed. Later on, Chômei established that this usage was justifiable because *Semi no ogawa* was another name for the Kamo river and had been recorded as such in the annals of the Kamo Shrine. Subsequently the phrase was taken up by the poets Takanobu and Kenshô in their own poems. Chomei got the recognition he deserved when this poem, together with nine others of his, were included in the *Shinkokinshû*. Reflecting on this Chômei remarked, "This was an honour that went far beyond what I deserved. Among all these poems, the inclusion of this particular poem brought me such happiness as to be a hindrance even in future lives. And yet, alas, how worthless all this is! (Aware mueki na koto ka na)."

There were several reasons for Chômei's extreme pleasure at having had this poem included in the *Shinkokinshû*. He had introduced into poetic usage a phrase that had never been used before. When its authenticity was questioned he had been able to cite a respectable source in which it had appeared. His contribution would be known to posterity now that the poem had made its way into the most prestigious Imperial anthology of his day.

However, looking back on this event, Chômei could not but feel (in a manner very reminiscent of his mood in the closing passage of the *Hôjôkî*) that this pleasure was a petty one. Looked at from a larger, spiritual perspective, it was of little value, indeed pointless. And yet, it must be emphasised that apart from this little aside, nowhere in the *Mumyôshô* does Chômei express any doubts about the value of poetry as a social practice which is rooted in worldly concerns. For Chômei, the ideal *sukimono* is one who devotes himself totally to the Way of Poetry and does not grudge even his life in his striving for perfection. At the same time, and no less important, the *sukimono* is one who sees his talents acknowledged by the society he lives in — poetic recognition is, in effect, a necessary condition of poetic excellence.

In this context it is worth relating another story from the *Mumyōshō*. The poet Toshiyori heard some *kugutsu* (a group of itinerant entertainers who sang songs, recited poetry, and staged puppet plays) singing some songs. Among these was a poem composed by Toshiyori himself. Hearing them, Toshiyori remarked to himself, "Toshiyori, you've arrived!" (*Toshiyori itari sōrainikeri na*). Chōmei comments on how impressive this event was. The Bishop Eien, hearing of Toshiyori's experience, felt so envious that he talked to some *biwa hōshi* and, offering them various presents, arranged for a poem of his to be recited in several places. His contemporaries remarked that Eien had shown a devotion to his art which was rarely to be seen in anyone (*arigataki sukibito*). The poet Atsuyori, hearing of these events, felt so jealous that he caught hold of some blind people and forced them to sing his songs without giving them anything. Chomei explains that Atsuyori became the laughing stock of the world.27

We have here a rather interesting progression. It is clear that the poet Toshiyori who, without any special effort, receives recognition because of his greatness as a poet, receives unequivocal praise. It is worth noting, however, that the Bishop Eien is also acknowledged as being a poet who shows rare dedication to his art (*arigataki sukimon*), and Chōmei reports this with apparent approval. Buying the privilege of having his poems sung by minstrels is not looked upon as being in any way unethical. Eien's great devotion to poetry makes him realize the greatness of Toshiyori's achievement and he wishes to emulate him. He does this by following the accepted practice of paying some *biwa hōshi* for their services.28 The last in this progression is Atsuyori. Echoing

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28 One might mention here that in the discipline of music too, the privilege bestowed upon a pupil of having one of the secret melodies revealed to him by his teacher depended not only on the level of progress made by the pupil, but also on his ability to buy this right through an appropriate present to the master. See Iso Mizue, "Biwa hikkyoku denjū saho no seiritsu to haiketa", in *Toyō ongaku kenkyū*, no.48, Toyō ongaku gakkai, 1982.
as he does Eien's sentiments, his desire to have his poems recited by musicians is in no way reprehensible. There is however something in the manner in which he seeks to accomplish this desire that makes it unacceptable. The use of means not sanctioned by precedent — his lack of refinement — makes Atsuyori the laughing stock of the world.

**Conclusion**

Clearly, the ideal of *michi* was a worldly as well as a 'spiritual' one. The *sukimoto* in the *Mumyōshō* are situated within the world of the court, and it is there that they strive to produce poetry which is of outstanding quality and, equally, expect to see their dedication to poetry rewarded through success and recognition in society. This fact is of particular significance when we re-examine the ideal of *suki* as it appears in a very different work of Chōmei's, his collection of religious tales, the *Hosshinshū*.

In the *Hosshinshū*, Chōmei places the *sukimoto* not in the context of court society, but in the secluded world inhabited by the Buddhist recluse for whom the spiritual goals of Buddhism are of paramount importance. In this new setting the worldly aspects that Chōmei had associated with the *sukimoto* in the *Mumyōshō* have to be 'negotiated', and only those elements within the ideal of *suki* which are clearly linked with other-worldliness can be highlighted. In the chapter that follows I argue that there is a shift in emphasis in the use of this term in Chōmei's religious work, which represents an attempt to grapple with this 'worldly' aspect of *suki*.

In conclusion, it is worth looking at a fourteenth century assessment of *waka* by the great master of *renga* (linked verse), Nijō Yoshimoto(1320-88). In the *Tsukuba mondo*, which is composed in the form of questions and answers, Yoshimoto, when asked whether *renga* could be a means to enlightenment, responds in the affirmative and proceeds to point out some basic differences between *waka* and *renga*:

...*Renga* does not carry over an idea conceived of in a previous moment to the future. In *renga*, success and failure, joy and sorrow, replace and succeed one another and in this way *renga* follows the course of this fleeting world. Even as one thinks of yesterday, today
is gone; when one thinks of spring it is already autumn and while one is thinking of cherry blossoms, they have already become the autumn leaves. Is this not the same as meditating on the ephemerality of this world? In the past people showed too much attachment to the Way of Poetry (uta no michi), and there are examples of a poet who exchanged his life for one verse or of the poet who died because he could not endure the criticism his poem had received. This is not the case with renga. In renga, one simply enjoys the pleasure of composing for that moment, and thus there is no question of having a mind steeped in attachment.

For Yoshimoto, the major problem with waka poets was their fierce commitment to the composition of a particular poem, the success or failure of which could sometimes be a matter of life and death. Renga masters, on the other hand, were concerned only with the fleeting moment. They gave no consideration to a previous thought or to what was to follow but simply produced the next phrase on the basis of the phrase before their eyes. No single poet could claim exclusive authorship of a poem. There was therefore much less reason to regard poetry as an individual enterprise that could bring fame and success. The very form of renga, then, was seen as being more in tune with the essentially changing and evanescent nature of the world, and hence as free of the problem of attachment. Chômei, as we have seen, belonged to a world in which the Way of Poetry (waka) had been accorded supreme status above all other artistic activities. Even after Chômei left the court, he was unable to reject waka. However, the problem of attachment, of worldliness, which Yoshimoto identified with the practice of waka, was one that Chômei had to contend with in the Hosshinshû. What resulted was a redefinition of the character of poetry and of the sukimono who devoted themselves to it, in ways that established poetry as a practice that was singularly consonant with the religious path.

29 This is a reference to the poet Yorizane, whom Chômei speaks about in the Mumyôshô and the poet Fujiwara Nagato who appears in the Fukurozôshi which I quoted earlier.

CHAPTER V

SUKI AND THE ATTAINMENT OF RELIGIOUS AWAKENING: THE HOSSHINSHŪ

Introduction

In the previous Chapter I argued that the ideal of suki was central to Chōmei's articulation of the qualities and practices that made for the outstanding poet. The sukimono in the Mumyōshō emerged as a person who devoted his entire life to the pursuit of poetry. This involved also being an active participant in the poetic activities of the court, for it was only there that people could make their mark as a poets worthy of acclaim. In the Mumyōshō, these two elements, that is, the total absorption in poetry and the desire to see this dedication recognized and rewarded, are integral to the qualities that make for the ideal sukimono.

The explicit separation and indeed polarization of these two urges occurs in Chōmei's collection of Buddhist setsuwa, the Hosshinshū. This is a collection of exemplary tales about monks and wandering holy men (hijiri) who have renounced worldly life and its temptations. Through these tales Chōmei probes the conditions that are conducive to the awakening of the bodhi-mind (hosshin), which then ensures rebirth in the Pure Land.

In the preface to the Hosshinshū, Chōmei argues that while the Buddha's teachings as propagated through the various sutras are undoubtedly without compare, they are of little use to someone like himself whose mind has not attained to this ideal. It is for this
reason, he claims, that he does not aspire to the study of the profound doctrinal teachings and instead simply collects and records fleeting events that he has seen or heard.

He maintains that his stories are intended not for others but for himself and hence does not care if others believe his tales. As he says in the preface to the *Hosshinshū*, "Through these trivial tales that I have picked up by the way-side I wish merely to experience, at least a little, the religious awakening of my mind (*hosshin*)."\(^1\)

Chōmei's claim that his stories are meant for private use allows him to choose his material more freely and to include tales that he finds particularly appealing, especially those that relate to the practice of music and poetry and to the *sukimono* who are devoted to these artistic pursuits. The presence of these tales in a work of this nature is in itself significant and would perhaps justify an investigation of the meanings that Chōmei attached in this work to the term *sukimono*. But an analysis of the use of the concept of *suki* in the new context seems to me to be crucial also because it is in the *Hosshinshū* that Chōmei makes his most explicit attempt to integrate his deep attachment to artistic pursuits with his commitment to the Way of the Buddha.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is a dual one. First, I shall examine the meaning that Chōmei attaches to the term *suki* and the extent to which it still continues to share some of its fundamental attributes with those that appear in the works of the Heian period as well as in Chōmei's earlier work, the *Mumyōshō*. Secondly, by identifying the points at which the meaning of *suki* departs radically from its earlier signification, I hope to shed some light on the ways in which Chōmei attempts to bring together his aesthetic and spiritual ideals.

In the *Hosshinshū*, people who cultivate *suki*, the *sukimono*, are placed distinctly outside courtly society in which they were earlier situated. They are presented as recluses who live on the periphery of society. Often, they are *hijiri*, wandering holy

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\(^1\) *Hosshinshū*, p 45.
men with no fixed home, occupation or status within society, living merely on the alms that they receive from others: we shall meet several examples of this kind presently. Even when they do happen to be members of the court they act in a manner that goes against the norms of the society they inhabit. The sukimono’s spiritual guide is nature itself. The blossoming and scattering of the cherry blossoms or the waxing and waning of the moon make them keenly aware of the principle that all things are ephemeral (shōgyō mujō). This, Chōmei suggests, leads them in the most natural manner to live a life which is completely in tune with the Buddhist teachings. Having intuited the principle of evanescence, the sukimono no longer care about wealth and fame. This detachment from worldly concerns prepares them spiritually for enlightenment.2

Chōmei’s description of the sukimono in the Hosshinshū has striking resonances of the sukimono Yorimasa whom Chōmei eulogizes in the Mumyōshō.3 Yorimasa’s mind is deeply sensitive to even the most apparently trivial natural phenomenon, be it the scattering of the cherry blossoms, the cry of a bird or the rustling of the leaves in the wind. His major concern is to render what he sees and feels into poetry. His total absorption in this activity enables him to compose verses of an exceptional quality and this is what makes him a sukimono.4

In the Hosshinshū, as we shall see presently, it is precisely this other-worldly absorption in poetry and music that is singled out for praise. More importantly, there is a shift in what Chōmei sees as the final outcome of such devotion to the arts. In the case of Yorimasa, this single-minded dedication to poetry enables him to compose poetry of an outstanding quality. For the sukimono of the Hosshinshū, on the other hand, this total immersion in poetry or music enables him to lead a life which is in complete harmony with the Way of the Buddha. In order to establish this connexion between the arts and Buddhist goals, Chōmei rejects everything that had earlier linked the sukimono

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2 Ibid., p 278.
3 Mumyōshō, p 72.
with the material world. We are presented now with a sukimono who "finds no pleasure in mingling in society and does not lament even if he falls into straitened circumstances." Also, "he makes it his principle not to be tainted by worldly impurities." His understanding of the temporary nature of human existence leads him away from any attachment to wealth and fame.

However, Chômei does more than merely state the natural affinity between the life of the sukimono and of a person devoted to Buddhist practice. He draws on a whole range of theoretical formulations from the Buddhist doctrine to substantiate his claim. The success with which he does so and the sense of unease and uncertainty that occasionally accompanies the attempt indicate the extent to which Chômei is able to integrate the artistic concerns which had been a central part of his life as courtier with his vocation as a Buddhist priest.

In order to understand the special place that Chômei carves out for music and poetry in a work of avowedly Buddhist intent, it is useful to look again at the courtly values that were central to the concept of suki in Heian times and locate their presence in the context of the Hosshinshû. It is also instructive to identify the aspects of the ideal of suki which are rejected and the ones that are retrieved and remoulded to fit in with Chômei's religious preoccupations.

**Love and Enlightenment**

The cultivation of amorous relationships between men and women was without a doubt at the centre of the concept of suki in the Heian period. The ideal sukimono was one who was drawn to affairs of the heart and who pursued them with total commitment and sincerity. This ideal came to be epitomized in Hikaru Genji, the hero of the *Tale of Genji*. The qualities of refinement and sensitivity that accompanied amorous pursuits were of the greatest importance and it was believed that these could be best expressed

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4 *Hosshinshû*, p 278.
through Japanese poetry (waka). The skilful composition and exchange of poetry was an integral part of the relationship between exemplary lovers.

This figure of the ideal poet and lover modelled on the monogatari of Heian times continued to flourish in the romances of the Kamakura period. However, in the newly emerging and highly popular collections of tales called setsuwa, amorous relationships came to occupy a far more ambiguous position. Undoubtedly, this had much to do with the increasing importance of Buddhist values and practices which condemned all human attachments as delusions that prevented people from comprehending the unreal nature of the phenomenal world and thereby from attaining enlightenment. Carnal desires in particular were considered deeply sinful and were to be shunned by Buddhists. It is all the more striking, then, to find that Chômei includes a number of love stories in the Hosshinshû. Even while he writes these, ostensibly as illustrations of the follies of deluded attachment, there are occasions when Chômei allows love between the sexes a more positive role in the attainment of enlightenment. It is worthwhile, therefore, to look at some of these stories closely to see how Chômei condemns amorous attachments, but is unable to do so when such attachments are closely tied to the qualities of elegance, sensitivity and beauty which are integral to the culture he represents.

The story about the religious awakening of Kiyosuke begins much like a standard episode from a tale of love. Kiyosuke fell in love with a lady-in-waiting who served at court. Unfortunately, just at the time when he was deeply involved with her, his father was posted out of the capital and Kiyosuke had to leave with him for the distant provinces.

He found the thought of being away from her for even one day unbearable. The prospect then of parting and going far away was more than he could endure but there was nothing to be done. So
reassuring her with all kinds of promises, he departed, weeping all the while.5

Once away from the capital, he wrote to her whenever he could but he received no reply. After several years, when he finally did manage to return to the capital, he found that the lady he loved no longer worked at the palace because she had fallen ill during the epidemic. Not knowing where to find her, he made his way to the west of the capital where he knew the lady had acquaintances. As he rode around there he happened to see the woman who had worked for his lady in the past. At the sight of him the woman ran into the house. He followed her and there he saw the lady he had loved sitting with her back towards him, combing her hair. "He embraced her from behind and told her passionately how much he had worried about her." However she made no reply. All she did was weep. He assumed that this was probably because she resented his long absence. So he tried to comfort her in various ways. However she remained inconsolable and refused to turn towards him. Finally when he forced her physically to face him "he saw that her two eyes were missing. It was as if the branches of a tree had been uprooted. The sight was quite unbearable to behold."6

The woman in her service then explained what had happened. During her illness the lady had one day appeared to have breathed her last. So the person in her service had cast her body in the fields in front of the house. There the birds had pecked out her eyes and this is how she had come to be in her present state. "The sorrow and pain that Kiyosuke felt on hearing this tale was limitless. He asked himself what karma of his in the past could have brought such a misfortune upon him; and realizing that he had only this life in which to set things right, he made his way directly to Mount Hiei there to become the disciple of a Shingon master."7

5 Ibid., p 199.
6 Ibid, p 201.
7 Ibid, p 202.
What we have here is Chōmei's rendering of the notion of the essential foulness of the human body (fujoكان), which became an object of meditation in the Buddhist texts as a means of comprehending the true nature of the body. The Visuddhimagga by Buddhaghosa spells out at great length the various categories of the foul, that is, the swollen, the discoloured, the festering, the fissured, the mangled, the dismembered, the bloody, the worm-eaten and so on. Part of the training of a Buddhist monk involved spending time at the charnel fields there to observe, in every minute detail, the putrefaction of the human body. As Buddhaghosa's text tells us, men who do not know the true nature of the body and hence of the self, lust after women because they are deluded into believing that all that adorns the body temporarily is real. So too women lust after men without recognizing that in reality no aspect of the human body is fit to lust after.

Chōmei and his contemporaries were schooled in a culture which inherited its aesthetic sensibilities from the Heian court. This was a culture which rarely referred to the human body and shunned the expression of anything unseemly. In comparison with the Vissudhimagga, Chōmei's statement about a lady who was missing two eyes is extremely restrained. And yet within the context of Japanese courtly traditions, Chōmei appears to have subverted the traditional love plot of the romantic tales with great effect. The sudden introduction of the grotesque, bluntly inserted into a text that flows gently like the romances of old, shocks the reader out of his or her complacency, as though bringing him or her to an immediate realization of the 'unreality' of all things and the fleeting nature of this existence.

In the next story, the building up of a love theme in the manner of the Tale of Genji, and its subsequent overturning, is achieved with consummate skill. The very

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elements that make the story reminiscent of the *Tale of Genji* are suggestive of Chômei's ambiguous stand regarding the nature and role of amorous love.

A man who used to be in attendance on the Emperor once became intimate with a lady of great refinement (*yû naru onna*). However, after a while his visits to her became few and far between. Chômei suggests that this was probably because he had transferred his attentions to someone else. Eventually he stopped visiting the lady altogether. The lady in question passed her time forlornly, lamenting his fickleness. One day as he happened to go by her house he was accosted by a person who was in the lady's service and was told that the mistress wished to see him. Surprised and curious he went in through the gates. Chômei's story proceeds in a style common to the diaries and romances of the Heian period.

The weeds had grown thick and the garden had a rough and neglected look such as it had never had before. The sight of this filled him with an inexplicable feeling of sadness.  

As the protagonist entered the house he saw that his lady was kneeling down and reciting the *Lotus Sutra*. The echoes from the *Tale of Genji* are heard again:

She seemed to have suffered because she was a little thinner than before. However, the sight of her hair hanging down in profusion, the extremely pure and fragile beauty of her form, made him wonder if she was the same person that he had known before, such was the incomparable beauty of her appearance. He wondered with a pang of deep regret what madness had induced him to stop loving her...He then began to tell her with the deepest passion how much he regretted having neglected her.  

In Chômei's story, however, the lady does not reply but continues to recite the *sutra*. As the man waits for her to finish, his heart filled with incomprehension, she recites a particular phrase from the *Lotus Sutra* two or three times. Then while still

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10 *Hosshinshû*, p 205.  
kneeling she breathes her last, looking as though she has merely fallen asleep. Chōmei concludes with a moral:

We have heard examples of people who because of their [unrequited] love turned into stones or became malevolent spirits. Although, without a doubt, love is a deeply sinful practice, the fact that this lady was able to make it the means (en) for entering the Pure Land and that she ended her life in the way she wanted, suggest that she was possessed of truly wondrous intent (kokoro). If only people who have suffered because of an unfortunate love affair were to emulate this lady and pray for rebirth in the Pure Land, what noble spirit they would display.\textsuperscript{12}

This story, more than any other in the *Hosshinshū*, has all the elements that were central to Japanese tales of love of the Heian period. A man falls in love with a lady of great refinement but after a while, becomes involved with another lady and more or less abandons his earlier attachment. His first lady is deeply dependent on him both emotionally and materially. This is reflected in the months and years she passes sunk in melancholy. It is highlighted too in the state of her garden, that evidently cannot survive without male patronage. Seeing her again after several years, the man is deeply moved by her beauty. As with the heroine of the Heian romance it is the pure, thin and fragile quality of her beauty that especially appeals to him. The man now regrets having given up this helpless beauty and by telling her with deep passion about his longing for her, he hopes to renew the earlier relationship.

It is from this point that the story takes an entirely different turn. The lady sits there reciting the Lotus Sutra without stopping to reply to the man. The man who had all along appeared to be in control now waits for her to finish, "his heart filled with anxiety and incomprehension." In the end when the lady dies with great dignity reciting lines from the Lotus Sutra, Chōmei comments,"I wonder how this man must have felt at that

moment." The novel ending to this tale of love is as unexpected for the reader as it is for its male protagonist.

It is clear from both the stories discussed above that this radical displacement of the place of love within human values and ideals stems from Chômei's concern to draw a religious moral from these tales. Thus he reiterates that love is a deeply sinful practice which can bring nothing but pain and suffering. And yet even when Chômei condemns amorous relationships as deluded and sinful, many of the values attendant on courtly love, such as grace, refinement, depth of feeling and so on, seem so basic to Chômei's definition of the "good" that he is unable to dispense with worldly love altogether. This may in part explain why Chômei allows a lady's experience of love to become the cause of her spiritual enlightenment. It is perhaps no accident that the lady who is able to convert such a "deeply sinful practice" into a means to enlightenment is a person of great refinement, purity and beauty. We shall see presently that Chômei establishes this connection between beauty and grace and religious awakening explicitly in some of the stories in the *Hosshinshû*.

And yet, it is necessary to stress that in the *Hosshinshû* Chômei does not uphold the experience of love as being good in itself. In the stories presented to us, it is not fulfilment in love, but rather love's failure, that can on occasion be turned into a means to transcend the sinfulness of such attachment. Chômei is at pains to explain that involvement in love has consequences beyond the present life, since the retribution of such attachment carries over into future lives.

If only human beings could cut off all thoughts of love and be reborn in the Pure Land, all pain and anguish [born of love] would appear as illusory as a dream seen at night in one's sleep.13

This stands in striking contrast to the position that Chômei adopts as regards attachment to poetry and music, and more generally to the ideals of refinement (yû) and

13 *Ibidem*
depth of feeling (nasake fukaki) when these are placed outside the context of amorous love.

Refinement and Sensitivity as Indices of Spiritual Purity

Amorous love then, which was an integral part of the ideals of suki and irogonomi in the Heian period, plays little part in Chômei's search for the conditions leading to religious awakening. Refinement and sensitivity, however, are ideals from an earlier age which Chômei finds easier to weave into the overriding theme of his work, namely, the pursuit and attainment of enlightenment.

A story that Chômei relates in the Hosshinshû about the famous poet and priest Saigyō is of particular interest in this context. After becoming a priest, so the story tells us, Saigyō entrusted his little daughter to his younger brother's care. After a few years he happened to return to the capital and go past the house where his brother had lived. Remembering his daughter he looked in through the gates in the hope of being able to catch a glimpse of her. He did indeed see her, "dressed in a shabby single robe, mixing freely with the servants' children and playing in the dirt by the side of the fence." As a point of contrast with this degraded social condition of the girl we are presented with a description of her physical beauty. "Her luxurious hair hung down gracefully to her shoulders. Her form too was quite exquisite: she promised to be quite a beauty when she grew up."\(^{14}\) In a society where beauty and grace were thought to go hand in hand with nobility, this description serves as a reminder of the girl's respectable origins.

The story then goes on to tell us that Saigyō's wife arranged for the girl to be adopted by the lady Reizen, who looked after her with great affection. When the girl was fifteen years old she was sent to the family of Fujiwara Ieakira, who held third rank, to work as a lady-in-waiting. Hearing about this, Saigyō met his daughter and

\(^{14}\) Ibid, p 263.
advised her to become a nun. The reasons he offered are significant for the present discussion. Speaking to his daughter Saigyō said,

> Since the time you were born I have prayed for only one thing: that when you came of age you would become the Empress’s lady-in-waiting or perhaps serve an Imperial princess. That you would end up being in the employ of a second rate household such as this one, I had not imagined even in my dreams... It is my wish that you should join your mother and place yourself in the service of the court of the Buddha (hotoke no miya tsukae). That would bespeak true refinement (kokoro nikushi).\(^1\)

The rest of the story is an account of the way in which the girl obeys her father and joins her mother, also a nun, at Amano to devote herself to Buddhist practice. The purpose of the tale is presumably to illustrate the unquestioning filial loyalty of Saigyō’s daughter, who is praised for following her father’s orders without a word of protest and for her ability to give up the pleasures of the secular life without regrets and lingering attachments.

But it is Chōmei’s portrayal of Saigyō which is of particular interest because through him Chōmei expresses many of the values and sensibilities that he holds dear. Saigyō is presented in this tale as one who has cut himself off from all worldly ties. He shows no concern for his physical appearance and lives a life of utmost simplicity. He is described as a “rugged monk, gaunt and swarthy in appearance, wearing a black habit made of hemp and a surplice.”\(^2\) His unkempt manner causes the children who see him to run away in fear. His physical appearance speaks of his total detachment from the world and of the austerity of his religious practice. In this he is like other hijiri such as Genpin and Byōdo whom Chōmei upholds in the Hosshinshū.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Ibid., p 265-6.

\(^2\) Ibid, p 265.

\(^3\) Ibid, pp 46-58. The account of Saigyo presented by Chomei is problematic. It is not clear whether or not it is worthy of credence. The figure of Saigyo presented here may be no more than Chomei’s projection.
Despite the fact that Saigō has cut himself off from the world he is unable to give up worrying about his daughter's future. There are many stories in the *Hosshinshū* where Chōmei deals sympathetically with those who have cast aside worldly life but are nonetheless unable to forget their families and their superiors whom they have served. It is worth noting, however, that it is only when this attachment to worldly things is expressed in a form that is valued by the nobility, only when it arises precisely because of a close identification with courtly ideals and aspirations, that Chōmei is able to speak of it with sympathy and even approval. Thus it is Saigō's deep entrenchment in the hierarchical world of court society and his desire to identify with the upper echelons of the nobility that lead him to express his concern for his daughter in the form of an overriding anxiety about her social status. His greatest ambition is to see her working in the service of the Empress. Concomitant with the high value he places on social standing is his disdain for a life spent at the lower rungs of the nobility. In the end his advice to his daughter to become a nun is not motivated so much out of a recognition of the ultimate superiority of the Buddhist Way but rather as the only honourable alternative to a life spent in the service of a "second ranking household". This, he says, is the only way in which his daughter can hope to lead a life that is dignified and refined (*kokoro nikushi*). This conception of the good and the honourable in terms of elegance and refinement derives clearly from an aristocratic culture and it is this culture which affects the way in which Buddhism is received and interpreted by Chōmei. His account of Saigō is one in which he projects his own values on the poet Saigō.

Another story from the *Hosshinshū* about the Middle Counsellor Akimoto helps to make this clearer. Chōmei begins by telling us that Akimoto was in the service of the Emperor Go Ichijō. From his youth he had little cause to be unhappy with his rank and status at court. And yet he yearned only to follow the Buddhist path and to attain enlightenment. His commitment to the Way of the Buddha was particularly impressive precisely because it was not born out of unhappy circumstances. Chōmei describes
Akimoto as a formidable *sukibito*: "He spent his time playing the *biwa* night and day while intoning the following prayer, "Although I have committed no crime, I would that I could shoulder responsibility for it and be banished; I long to gaze at the moon from a place of exile."\(^{18}\)

At the death of the Emperor Go Ichijō, Akimoto’s grief far surpassed that of the other courtiers. These courtiers gradually became involved in attending on the new Emperor, and with time the old Emperor’s residence came to be neglected. When Akimoto heard of this he was struck all the more by the transience of all worldly things. He refused to appear before the new Emperor and said, "A faithful retainer does not serve two masters." Waiting until the mourning period for the Emperor had ended, Akimoto then left his home and went up to Yokawa. There he took the tonsure and began to live the life of a recluse.

At this time the mother of the former Emperor, Lady Jōtōmon-in inquired after him. He replied to her with the following poem:

\[
\begin{align*}
Yo o sutete & \quad \text{Although I am one} \\
Yado o idenishi & \quad \text{Who has cast aside the world} \\
Mi naredomo & \quad \text{And left my home} \\
Nao koishiki wa & \quad \text{My longing for the past} \\
Mukashi narikeri & \quad \text{Remains as ever unchanging.}
\end{align*}
\]

We are told that later Akimoto went to live in Ōhara and devoted himself single-mindedly to Buddhist practices. While at Ōhara, Akimoto was visited by the Imperial Regent. They spent the whole night talking and throughout not a word relating to worldly affairs passed between them. The Regent was so impressed by Akimoto that he elicited a promise from him that he would be his spiritual guide. At the moment of parting, Akimoto thanked him for his visit and added, "Toshizane leaves much to be

desired." Later on when the Regent thought about what Akimoto had said, he surmised that the situation was thus:

No one would speak ill of his or her own child. Even if Toshizane [Akimoto's son] is not an exceptional person, Akimoto obviously cannot forsake him and so perhaps he wants me to take him under my wings. Truly, even if one has turned one's back on the world, how hard it is to cast aside the love one feels for one's child. No wonder then that Akimoto was so overwhelmed with concern for his son.19

The Regent, Chōmei tells us, was so moved by Akimoto's request that he went out of his way to promote Toshizane who eventually became the Grand Counsellor of Mino.

There are many elements in this story that are noteworthy. Akimoto is described as a sukibito who spends his time "playing the biwa day and night", and reciting a poem by the poet Po Chu"i or some of his own compositions. It is in keeping with the other sukibito in the Hosshinshū that Akimoto combines a devotion to poetry and music with a total disregard for worldly success. Although he has no reason to be discontent with his life at court, he feels naturally inclined towards the other-worldly — the Buddhist Path.

What is particularly striking about Akimoto, however, is the depth of his loyalty to the Emperor Go Ichijō. Equally noteworthy is the sensitivity and grace with which he expresses his loyalty. His grief at the death of the Emperor, Chōmei tells us, far surpasses the ordinary. In contrast to the way in which the other retainers shifted allegiance, Akimoto refuses to serve the new Emperor and waits until the period of mourning for the dead Emperor is over before he leaves the court in order to become a priest. So too, when the Emperor's mother inquires after him, he composes a poem to express his longing for the past when the Emperor was alive. The choice of the medium

of *waka* to express his loyalty to the Emperor, and his nostalgia for the days gone by, invest his sentiments with added dimensions of both sincerity and refinement.

Throughout the story Chōmei succeeds in maintaining a balance between detachment and attachment — Akimoto's commitment to the Buddhist Way and his indifference to the material world on the one hand, and his loyalty to the Emperor and his continued concern for his son's career on the other. His move to Ōhara, for example, appears to be marked by an intensification of his religious activities and a sharper break with the secular world. In Ōhara, we are told, Akimoto "devoted himself single-mindedly (*futagokoro naku*) to the pursuit of Buddhist practices." Equally when he was visited by the Imperial Regent, they spent a whole night talking and throughout not a single word pertaining to worldly matters passed between them. Here again Chōmei is at pains to point out Akimoto's total dedication to his religious vocation and his rejection of worldly life.

However, at the moment of parting with the Regent, Akimoto reveals his lingering involvement with the world he has left behind by requesting, in veiled terms, that the Regent promote his son. Chōmei's own sympathy with Akimoto's position is expressed through the words and actions of the Regent, who is deeply moved by Akimoto's love for his child and ensures that Toshizane is promoted to a higher position.

The potential tension between Akimoto's avowed devotion to the Buddhist Way and his continued attachment to the Emperor and his child is circumvented by Chōmei in a manner which tells us about the culture in which he is rooted. It is perhaps not without significance that it is within the larger framework of refinement and the cultivation of artistic pursuits, that is to say, of *suki*, that both Akimoto's religious leanings from an earlier age and the depth of his feelings (*nasake*) for the Emperor are situated. It is a striking reflection of the power of aestheticism in the lives of men such as Chōmei.

Or again, in the story about the young man Kunisuke, who takes the tonsure and devotes himself to Shingon practice, Kunisuke wins fulsome praise from his teacher for
the manner in which he performs a certain dance. It is remarkable that it is this aspect of Kunisuke's life as a person who has abandoned worldly life which Chômei chooses to highlight in this story.

Having taken the priestly name Tônôbo, Kunisuke had begun to learn the Shingon teachings. During the course of his training, his teacher said to him, "I have heard that when you lived in the secular world you were a talented mime and that you entertained people with your comic performances. I would like to see you perform the Senshûbanzai." Chômei suggests that the teacher made this request probably because he wished to test the spiritual level of his pupil. Tônôbo complied in the most natural manner, that is, as though this was a very normal request for his teacher to have made. He took some paper that served as a wrapping for the sutras and putting it on his head like a cap he proceeded to dance with great elegance.

Chômei's story concludes with the following observation. Seeing Tônobô, his teacher was moved to tears and praised him with the following words,"I was convinced that you would refuse to dance but I see that you are truly a person who has experienced religious awakening. You are worthy of the greatest esteem."20

What is it about Tônobô's behaviour and performance that moves his teacher so deeply and convinces him that Tônobô has reached a spiritual level of a high order? What the text tells us explicitly is that Tônobô's teacher expected him to refuse to dance: the fact that he agreed to do so was taken as a sign that he had experienced religious awakening. The Senshûbanzai was a dance performed by the lower classes to pray for prosperity or longevity. The beginning of the story about Kunisuke points to his humble origins. We are told that he worked as a low ranking official at the palace. Being asked to perform this dance could have been seen as an unpleasant jibe at his lowly social station. Also, for one who had cut himself off from secular activities, the

20 Ibid, p 204.
performance of this dance could be taken to mean a step back into a world that he had rejected. The fact that he refused to be offended was perhaps a reflection of the fact that he had transcended petty human feelings of resentment and humiliation that arise out of an involvement with self and this could account for his teacher's words of praise.

Equally important from Chômei's point of view was the fact that Tônobô performed the dance with great dignity and grace (*medetaku mautarikereba*). It is significant that it is the tasteful manner in which he executes this dance even while improvising with whatever he has at his disposal (he has to use some sutra wrapping paper as a cap) that brings forth his master's tears (*medetaku mautarikereba ajari namida* o toshite). Thus Chômei establishes something of a causal connexion between Tônobô's religious awakening and his refined performance of the dance. This interconnexion between the religious and the aesthetic is one that Chômei develops more consciously in those of his stories that refer specifically to *sukimono* and their practices. In many of these, Chômei writes as if to suggest that there is a 'natural' link between *suki* and *hosshin*.

The 'Natural' Affinity Between *Suki* and Spirituality

We shall begin with the story about the Chamberlain Grand Counsellor, Narimichi. As a young child, Narimichi fell seriously ill with malaria. His parents called in their regular Buddhist priest to chant prayers to cure him of his illness. But his efforts proved in vain. In despair, his parents contemplated calling in another priest. However, Narimichi objected saying that it would be humiliating for the priest to be dismissed at that point, given that he had looked after Narimichi since the time he had been in his mother's womb. His parents were deeply touched by his sensitivity and followed their son's wishes. Eventually the priest's prayers were efficacious and Narimichi was cured. Chômei concludes with the following remarks:

This gentleman [Narimichi] possessed such a temperament from an early age. In his dealings with people, no matter whether they were
his inferiors or his peers, he always showed them the deepest consideration (nasake) and he left behind a reputation of being a person of great refinement (yū nari). In all respects he was a great sukibito and so his heart was not tainted by worldly impurities. Also his ties with women were weak and hence the bad karma that he carried over to his next life must surely have been of an inconsequential nature.21

We know that particular stories appear in slightly different recensions, or even in identical form, in different setsuwa collections compiled at different times. It is instructive to see how a certain body of material available at the time was selected by several different writers of setsuwa and used for different purposes. The story of Narimichi is a case in point. The Ima Kagami, compiled around 1180, narrates several episodes in the life of Narimichi. His great skill at playing the flute, composing poetry, at football, go and horse-riding and the dedication with which he cultivates these talents are described at length. There are anecdotes too about his romantic escapades with both men and women.22

Nowhere in these stories in the Ima Kagami is Narimichi described as a sukimono. Although he is presented as a person who is devoted to artistic pursuits and has achieved a high level of competence in various fields, he appears to lack the same degree of sensitivity and seriousness that Chōmei attributes to him. He emerges as no more than a colourful character and the anecdotes about him seek merely to entertain and carry no moral purport.

Chōmei, on the other hand, takes up one incident in the life of Narimichi to illustrate the extreme consideration that he shows to the priest in his family's service. What is stressed is his inborn sensitivity — "he possessed such a temperament from an

21 Ibid, p 270.
early age" — which stands in contrast to its absence in his own parents. Chōmei then proceeds to link Narimichi's quality of sensitivity with his refined temperament and suggests that it is the coming together of these qualities that makes Narimichi a sukimono. As a final stage in his argument he draws a causal connection between the fact of his being a sukimono and his attainment of spiritual purity. "In all respects he was a great sukimono and so his heart was not tainted by worldly impurities." Ironically, what appears in the Ima Kagami as Narimichi's amorous interest in both men and women, is presented in the Hosshinshū as a lack of excessive interest in women. This, Chōmei claims, saves Narimichi from accumulating bad karma which would be a hindrance to his spiritual advancement. What is particularly significant is that Narimichi follows the Buddhist path of virtue and detachment without attempting to do so consciously. The fact that he is a sukimono leads him in the most 'natural' way to live a life of spiritual purity. It is by 'naturalizing' this connection between suki and enlightenment that Chōmei conceals his own construction of it. This becomes apparent in many other stories about sukimono in the Hosshinshū.

One such story is about the monk Eishū, a relation of Yorikiyo, the Intendant of the Hachibata shrine. He is described as a person who belongs to an impoverished family but whose heart is, nonetheless, drawn to artistic pursuits to which he devotes himself single-mindedly (kokoro sukeriken). Eishū, we are told, did nothing but play the flute night and day. His neighbours found this constant sound of his music extremely disturbing and they gradually left their homes until finally there was nobody left in his neighbourhood. However, this did not affect him in the least.

Yorikiyo heard of Eishū's straitened circumstances and sent him a message saying that he was to ask for whatever he needed without any hesitation. Eishū met Yorikiyo and explained what he wanted above everything else:

You have a great deal of land in Tsukushi where Chinese bamboo grows. This is bamboo from which flutes of the highest quality are made. I wonder if you would present me with one such flute. This
is something that I have yearned for above everything else but being a person of no consequence, it has been hard for me to obtain one.\textsuperscript{36}

Yorikiyo found his request so unexpected and touching that he assured him that his wish would be granted without delay. He also urged Eishū to ask for some things that would be useful for him in his day-to-day life. However, Eishū declined saying:

I feel extremely grateful for your kind consideration. But truly, I lack for nothing. If I receive a single-layered summer robe of the kind I have on in the second or third month, it will see me through to the tenth month. As for the rest, I entrust my daily needs to fate and I shall somehow pass the days.\textsuperscript{37}

Yorikiyo was so moved and impressed by Eishū's words that he declared him a genuine \textit{sukimono}, and hastened to have the flute sent to him. He also included several things which he felt would be useful to Eishū in his daily life. Eishū accepted these gifts, and, while his provisions lasted, he invited the musicians of Hachibata shrine to his home. Supplying them with wine he spent the days playing music in their company. Once he had run out of supplies, he reverted once more to his old habit of spending the days and nights playing the flute in solitude. In the end his dedication to music bore fruit and he became an expert who had no peer in the art of flute playing. Chômei concludes with a rhetorical question, "In what aspect of life could a person with such a heart possibly commit a deep sin (Kayô naran kokoro wa nani ni tsukete ka wa fukaki tsumi mo haberan)?".

In a culture in which grace and refinement were the prerogative of the noble and the wealthy, Chômei is at pains to stress that Eishū is an exception. "Although he was destitute, there was nothing mean or vulgar about his behaviour and so it was only natural that no one looked down on him." \textsuperscript{38} Eishū's total devotion to music enables

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36} Hosshinshû, p 272.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Ibid, p 273.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Ibid, p 271.
\end{itemize}
him to escape from the limitations imposed on him by poverty. "Although he came from a poor family his heart was given to refined pursuits" (Je mazushikute kokoro sukerikeru). His dedication to music enables him also to disregard totally his material needs. When Eishū asks Yorikiyo for a flute of a high quality, his desire is not presented as stemming from an egoistic attachment to objects but is to be seen rather as a measure of his extreme devotion to his art. As Yorikiyo remarks, it is a reflection of the fact that he is a genuine sukimono. Hand in hand with his unconcern for material objects is his singular detachment from human beings. He does not socialize in any way with those that live around him. So, too, he is utterly unperturbed by the fact that the sound of his flute drives his neighbours away from their own homes.

It is Eishū's power to transcend all material and human attachments that leads Chōmei to ask at the end of the story, "In what aspect of life could one with such a heart possibly commit a deep sin?" However it is not Eishū's detachment alone that accounts for his spiritual superiority. As in the case of Narimichi, it is Eishū's life as a sukimono that elevates him to a state where his heart cannot be tainted by sinful behaviour. In this incident about Eishū, Chōmei brings together a range of qualities and makes them constituent elements of the essence of suki. Refinement, a devotion to an artistic practice and great mastery of that art were of course fundamental to the ideal of suki as it came to be defined from the Kamakura period onwards, and to the way in which Chōmei himself uses the term in the Mumyōshō. To these qualities, Chōmei adds what are significant new elements: unworldliness, a disregard for material needs, and spiritual purity, a heart which is untainted by any sins.

Throughout the story, Chōmei makes no claim that Eishū, even while being a monk, follows the Buddhist Path, and there is no indication that Eishū regards the pursuit of music as tantamount to Buddhist practice. Indeed Eishū has no religious goal in mind. He lives only for his music. Unlike the hijiri in the Hosshinshū who refuse gifts that are given to them, Eishū accepts Yorikiyo's offerings. However, these are not
things that he covets for himself. They are a means by which he is able to invite other musicians who share his passion for music to his home, so that he may play music all day long in their company. In the end, we are told, his dedication to music bears fruit and he becomes a flute player who has no peer. This achievement is the ultimate consummation of years of devotion to a *michi* and Chômei clearly acknowledges the value of this accomplishment. But given the context of the *Hosshinshû* it is imperative for Chômei to go further and present the attainment of spiritual purity as a necessary concomitant to his mastery of the art. In a work in which, as Chômei says in his preface, he wishes to probe into the conditions which enable human beings to experience religious awakening, he demonstrates convincingly that the *sukimono* who dedicates himself to a *michi* follows the Buddhist path even if he does so unwittingly.

The story that follows the one entitled "Eishû's *suki*" in the *Hosshinshû* is a variation on the same theme: overriding devotion to music and the subsequent dismissal of all other worldly concerns as inconsequential. Tokimitsu, we are told, held the position of an official who supervised the market place. He was also a player of the reed organ (*shô*). He and Shigemitsu, a teacher of the flageolet (*hichiriki*) were once absorbed in singing a composition of *gagaku* music when there was an urgent message asking Tokimitsu to appear before the Emperor. Tokimitsu, however, took no notice of the messenger and continued with his singing. The messenger returned to the Emperor wondering what kind of punishment Tokimitsu would receive for such blasphemous behaviour. But, contrary to his expectations, the Emperor was moved to tears and remarked:

Tokimitsu is truly a man worthy of the greatest esteem. How splendid it is that he can be so absorbed in music as to forget everything else. How I regret my position as Emperor. If only I could walk over and listen to them perform.39

Chōmei concludes:

If one thinks of incidents such as these, one realizes that suki can be specially depended upon as a means to discard all thoughts concerning worldly matters.\(^{40}\)

Unlike Eishū whose life is devoted entirely to playing the flute and who maintains minimal contact with the outside world, both Tokimitsu and Shigemitsu are active members of society. Tokimitsu holds an official post as manager of the market-place and Shigemitsu is a teacher of the flageolet. Eishū’s disregard for his material needs is demonstrated concretely through his encounter with Yorikiyo. With Tokimitsu, on the other hand, his lack of concern over his material welfare takes a more symbolic form: he ignores the messenger who informs him that the Emperor wishes him to appear at the court without delay. What Tokimitsu does in effect is undermine the authority of the Emperor without any anxiety about the serious consequences this could have on his career, indeed, his very existence. Flouting an Imperial command would certainly lead to loss of his official post. It could also mean banishment from the capital. No wonder then that the messenger goes back worrying about the kind of punishment the Emperor would mete out to Tokimitsu.

Unquestioning loyalty to the Emperor was, to be sure, an important ideal of court culture and one that Chōmei fully endorses. And yet, if one were to conceive of a hierarchy of values that Chōmei subscribes to, it is clear from this story that he places total absorption in an artistic pursuit — the ideal of suki — at its pinnacle. The ultimate sanction for the transcendence of suki over all other ideals comes from the Emperor himself. Far from being angry with Tokimitsu for disobeying him, he is moved to tears and full of admiration for Tokimitsu’s ability to forget everything else while engaged in playing music. Indeed, the Emperor goes further and laments the restrictions that his position as Emperor puts on him. He himself would like nothing better, he says, than to

\(^{40}\) Ibid, p 275.
go and listen to Tokimitsu and Shigemitsu's performance. In effect, the Emperor exalts the ideal of suki as standing above even the supreme honour of being Emperor.

Chōmei concludes the story with the statement that suki can be specially depended upon as a means to discard all thoughts concerning worldly matters. It is of great significance that to every story that celebrates the theme of suki in the Hosshinshū Chōmei appends a statement that points to the harmony of the Way of the sukimon with the Way of the Buddha or to the effectiveness of suki as a means to achieve a state of mind that is an essential basis for religious enlightenment. That this link is made quite consciously by Chōmei appears very likely, especially when we compare Tokimitsu's story with a similar rendition in the Ima Kagami.

In the Ima Kagami, we are told that Tokimitsu got together one day with another old gentleman like himself and they began to play go and sing songs. At that time a messenger arrived from the Emperor's court but they ignored him completely and did not bother to reply to him. The messenger derided them and then returned to the Emperor complaining about what had happened. However, the Emperor did not order them to be punished. Instead he remarked, "How moving this is. They were so absorbed in their music that they forgot everything else. What I regret most is my position as Emperor. It stops me from walking over and hearing them perform." The writer of the story comments that he found out that Tokimitsu was playing gagaku music with Michimitsu, the teacher of the flageolet.41

Apart from minor differences of the kind where Mochimitsu rather than Shigemitsu is named as Tokimitsu's musical partner, the plot of these two versions is practically identical. The emotional pitch of the tale in the Hosshinshū is perhaps more intense. The Emperor does not merely remark on how Tokimitsu has forgotten everything because of his absorption with music. He sheds tears and declares that

41 Ima Kagami zenshaku, Vol. 2, p 444
"Tokimitsu is truly a man worthy of the greatest esteem." But what is most notable for its absence in the *Ima Kagami*, and presence in the *Hosshinshū*, is Chōmei's conclusion to the tale. The writer of the *Ima Kagami* does praise Tokimitsu's devotion to music but does not speak of it in terms of *suki*. Nor does he attempt to link Tokimitsu's commitment to an artistic pursuit with Buddhist goals and ideals. That Chōmei finds it necessary not only to establish this link but to elaborate it at length is of the greatest importance, given Chōmei's object in compiling the *Hosshinshū* and his own background as a poet and musician.

We may refer to some other stories in the *Hosshinshū* which seek to establish the same kind of point. In Chōmei's account about Rennyo, for example, it is striking that he describes this priest as a *sukihi jiri*. The word appears to have been Chōmei's own coinage. Through this term Chōmei establishes a harmonious blend between aesthetic values that are central to the notion of *suki* and religious ideals that define the life of a *hi jiri*. By constructing a new concept and presenting it without resorting to explanations or justifications, Chōmei again presents as 'natural' the bond between 'artistic' and 'religious' activities.

Chōmei recounts how Rennyo one day remembered a poem that the Empress Teishi had composed at the time of her death and tied to the sash of the screen curtains in the hope that the Emperor would see it. The poem was:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Yomosugara} & \quad \text{If you have not forgotten} \\
\text{Chigirishi koto o} & \quad \text{The pledge we made} \\
\text{Wasurezuba} & \quad \text{Through the night} \\
\text{Koi nu namida no} & \quad \text{Eager am I to see} \\
\text{Iro zo yukashiki} & \quad \text{The colour of the tears of love.}\quad \text{42}
\end{align*}
\]

When the poem came to mind, Rennyo was deeply moved. Indeed it made such a deep impression on him that, weeping profusely, he recited her poem and chanted the
sonshō dharani (mystic verses) and offered the two as merit that would work towards her ultimate enlightenment in future lives. He kept this up throughout that long winter's night, alternately reciting her poem and the dharani, without dozing even once. The story ends with the statement, "He was indeed an extraordinary sukimo.

This story contains all the elements that Chōmei saw as central to the ideal sukimo. Like Narimichi, Rennyo was a highly sensitive person who had a natural compassion for others. The ability to be moved and to weep in an unrestrained manner was a highly exalted virtue from Heian times and Chōmei makes this quality a prerequisite for the sukimo. It is significant that what moved Rennyo was the Empress's expression of her love for the Emperor. But, equally, it was the expression of her concern in the form of waka that aroused in Rennyo the deepest emotions. Sensitivity, compassion, a keen appreciation of love's trials and tribulations and their expression through poetry were all qualities that were highly prized by the aristocracy of Heian and Kamakura times. They were also qualities, as we have seen, that were central to the concepts of irogonomi and suki.

In the Hosshinshū, Chōmei adds significant new elements to these qualities. For the ideal sukimo as conceived by Chōmei here, it is important that Rennyo's compassion for the Empress be expressed in Buddhist terms — hence his concern about her fate in future lives and his prayers on her behalf. But what constitutes his prayer? Not simply the recitation of a sutra or dharani. He treats poetry and dharani as if they were on a par. He recites them both alternately in the conviction that they will be effective in ensuring the future of the Empress.

Concern for the spiritual welfare of the Empress and its expression in the form of reciting dharani and waka alternately are indeed significant new qualities that Chomei attributes to the sukimo. On the one hand, Rennyo's single-minded devotion which leads him to undertake this recitation "without dozing even once through the long winter's night" is highly reminiscent of the rigour and passion with which the great
sukimono of the Kamakura period engaged in the cultivation of the disciplines of music and poetry. We have seen a very similar expression of Shunzei's perseverance and total absorption with the practice of poetry in the Sasamegoto, which I quoted earlier in Chapter Four.\textsuperscript{43} It is noteworthy, however, that in this case Rennyo's whole-hearted dedication is directed not to an artistic pursuit, as is Shunzei's, but rather towards a goal that is fundamentally religious in nature: he works for the spiritual advancement of the Empress in her future lives and for her ultimate attainment of enlightenment.

Having established a vital link between Rennyo's sensitivity and his commitment to Buddhist ideals, Chōmei proceeds to recount another episode in Rennyo's life. Here too he commends Rennyo's sensitivity and refinement but does not draw a Buddhist moral from the tale. During the upheavals of the Hōgen era, Chōmei tells us, the Retired Emperor Sutokuin was forced to move to Sanuki and live there under pitiable conditions as a virtual prisoner. Chōmei writes:

\begin{quote}
The sukihijiri Rennyo, of whom I spoke earlier, heard that it was very difficult for anyone to go and visit the Emperor in his place of exile. Being from the very beginning a person who felt the deepest sympathy for others, he was extremely saddened by the situation. Rennyo undertook an arduous journey to Sanuki to pay the Emperor a visit. Rennyo's own contact with the Emperor had been negligible and hence, as Chōmei says, the depth of his feelings for the exiled Emperor was particularly surprising. In the end, he undertook the journey to Sanuki himself. When Rennyo arrived at the Emperor's make-shift abode, he found that the place was so well guarded that it was impossible for him to get in. "The day passed in vain, and in the light of the moon Rennyo wandered around outside the precincts, playing on his flute." \textsuperscript{45} Around dawn a man emerged and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{43} See Chapter IV, pp 130-31.
\textsuperscript{44} Hosshinshū, p 278.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, p 279.
led him in. The utter desolation of the place overwhelmed Rennyo and he composed a poem and sent it to the Emperor. The latter responded immediately with another poem. Reading the Emperor's poem by the light of the moon, Rennyo, deeply struck with awe and reverence, returned to the capital, weeping all the while.

Here, the qualities that make Rennyo an ideal sukimo no are divorced from all Buddhist associations. What stands out is Rennyo's depth of feeling for the plight of the Emperor, who is forced to live a life of an exile. It is his deep sensitivity (nasake fukaki) and his consideration for others that motivates Rennyo to undertake a long and difficult journey to visit an Emperor with whom he has not had any personal contact.

Equally important, however, is the fact that Rennyo's sensitivity finds expression in forms that are culturally sanctioned. It is above all through poetry and music that he voices his sympathy for the exiled Emperor. As he waits outside the Emperor's dwelling, unable to enter through the gates, he spends the night playing on his flute by the light of the moon. We are not told how it happens, but obviously the sound of the flute played thus moves someone to order that Rennyo should be allowed to enter through the gates.

It is through waka that Rennyo communicates to the Emperor his sorrow at the fact that the latter is now reduced to living in such a desolate abode and his disappointment at having to return to the capital without meeting him. The Emperor too responds with an appropriate poem which so moves and impresses Rennyo that he returns home "weeping all the while". Even when an actual meeting between Rennyo and the Emperor fails, it is poetry that enables them both to communicate their heart-felt emotions to one another. Both the depth of his feelings for others, and the sensitive expression of his feelings through music and poetry, are signs of the sukimo no in Rennyo.
The Conscious Pursuit of Music and Poetry as Religious Practices

In the stories about Narimichi, Tokimitsu and Eishū, Chōmei constructs a 'natural' affinity between the Way of the *sukimono* and the Buddhist Path. In other incidents in the *Hosshinshū* he demonstrates how priests and laymen alike, acting upon this principle, take up poetry and music consciously as religious practices.

The story of the priest Hōnichi is a case in point. When asked by people what kind of religious observances he followed, Hōnichi would in the beginning be rather coy and merely say that he performed the three religious practices of the morning, noon and night (*sanji no gyo*). But when pressed further to describe these practices he admitted that he recited three poems at dawn, noon and dusk without missing a day and thus meditated on the transience of life. It is as if in order to reassert his view that the composition or recitation of poetry constitutes religious practice that Chōmei adds:

> Although this was an extremely unusual practice, the ways in which people's minds advance vary so greatly that religious practices too cannot but be diverse.46

Chōmei elaborates:

> In the commandery of Jun in China, the holy man Tanyung made crossing over a bridge the religious practice (*gyō*) that would lead him across to the Pure Land. The priest Ming Keng from the commandery of Ho reached the Pure Land by punting his boat across the waters.

Following this line of argument Chōmei establishes the validity of almost every kind of activity as constituting religious practice provided that it is performed with sincerity and seriousness of intent. There is a story in the *Hosshinshū* about an old man whose religious observance (*gyō*) was of quite a novel nature. This old man used to wander about begging and saying "*mashite*" (all the more so) no matter what he saw or

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heard.47 A holy man in Yamato province once dreamt that this old man was going to attain rebirth in the Pure Land. Seeking him out, the holy man asked him repeatedly to describe to him the kind of religious practice he performed. When pressed the old man replied that he did indeed follow one religious practice, that of mashite. Whenever things were really difficult and painful to bear he would merely say to himself, "mashite" — how much more awful would be the sufferings of hell — and this would make him fear the evil path. Similarly when he saw beautiful things he would say, "mashite" — how much more spectacular would be the beauties of the Pure Land — and thus he would prevent himself from being tempted by the delights of worldly life. The holy man was so impressed that he folded his palms and paid obeisance to the old man. As Chômei says:

Even if this old man most certainly did not meditate on the magnificence of the Pure Land, he always kept in mind the fundamental principles of the doctrine, no matter what the situation, and this too was a kind of religious practice (gyô) leading to the Pure Land.48

In this way, Chômei establishes the principle that even the most trivial acts could become gyô if performed in the proper spirit.

Chômei, however, singles out the cherished traditions of poetry and music and confers on them a special status in this regard. In the story about the priest Hônichi who made waka his religious practice, Chômei, after justifying activities such as punting a boat or crossing a bridge as religious observances, then explains why poetry deserves to be accorded a privileged place as a gyô:

How much more so, then, because the Way of Poetry is one which can penetrate to the essence of things, we can depend on it and

48 Ibid, pp 128-9
through this medium, calm the mind and meditate on the transience of all worldly things.\textsuperscript{49}

The practice of music, too, is one that Chōmei cherishes as an important religious practice. The story of the hijiri Kakunō who lived by the grave of Shōtoku Taishi is a case in point.\textsuperscript{50} Kakunō's love of music, we are told, was extraordinary. He would spend his days and nights fashioning biwa and koto out of planks and playing on them with bird feathers. He also made flutes from bamboo. As he played on these various instruments he would remark to himself, "How wonderful must be the sound of the music of the bodhisattvas and their entourage." This thought would move him so deeply that he would sit and weep. In the end, the hijiri died just as he had wished, with the sound of music playing in his ears. His death was followed by all the signs of his having achieved rebirth in the Pure Land. Even several days after his death, his body did not decompose. People then gathered round and revered him as a Buddha. On the forty-ninth day, his body disappeared and was not seen again. Chōmei concludes with the following observation:

Thus music too for those who believe in it as a religious practice (gyō) will become a religious observance (gyō) that will lead to the Pure Land.

Kakunō, like many of the hijiri in the Hosshinshū whom Chōmei idolises, is an eccentric man who does not care for worldly matters and, like Eishū, spends his time playing music with an obsessive passion. What is implicit here is that it is his wholehearted dedication to music which is responsible for his attainment of rebirth in the Pure Land. There are indications within the story, however, that Kakunō does not separate his musical activities from his thoughts about the Pure Land. Unlike Eishū, Kakunō, even while playing music, always thinks of the even greater beauty of the music of the

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, p 276.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, pp 311-2.
bodhisattvas as they welcome those who have attained enlightenment into the Pure Land. There is however, no explicit indication that Kakunō is working towards his own spiritual awakening. A more self-conscious assertion of music as religious practice can be seen in another episode in the Hosshinshū which follows the story about the priest Hōnichī which we recounted earlier.

Daini no Sukemichi, an extremely talented biwa player, would have nothing to do with customary religious observances. Every day he would go into the Buddhist prayer hall and play melodies on his biwa. He would have someone count the number of his recitals and have them transferred to his accumulated merit for the attainment of rebirth in the Pure Land (gokuraku ni ekō shikeru). 51

The conventional practice was to recite the nembutsu and, on the basis of the number of recitations, accumulate merit which could be directed towards the attainment of enlightenment. As in the case of Hōnichī, Chōmei finds it necessary to forestall any criticism of Sukemichi’s unusual practice with the following assertion:

Religious devotions are dependent on actual performance as well as the sincerity of one’s intentions and thus there is no way in which such practices can be condemned as worthless.

But Chōmei goes further. It is at this point in the text that he makes an elaborate statement in defence of suki and its special role in reaching the state of mind which is conducive to enlightenment.

...the practice of suki is one in which a person finds no pleasure in mingling in society. He does not lament even if he falls into straitened circumstances. He is moved by the blooming and scattering of the cherry blossoms. He calms the mind by meditating on the waxing and waning of the moon. He makes it his principle not to be tainted by worldly impurities. As a result of this, the fundamental truth of the transient nature of life reveals itself of its own accord to him and any attachment he may have had to fame and

wealth also comes to an end. This is the first step towards achieving escape from the cycle of births and deaths and entering nirvana.\footnote{Ibid, p 278.}

Devotion to poetry and music are of course fundamental to Chômei's understanding of suki. It is precisely in order to justify Hônichi's recitation of poetry and Sukemichi's performance of music as highly worthy religious practices that Chômei spells out what he considers the unique place of suki in the attainment of enlightenment. It is striking that what amounts to extreme attachment to the arts — as in the case of Eishû, Kakunô, Sukemichi, and Tokimitsu — is not viewed in those terms but is seen rather as a measure of their other-worldliness. Attachment in such instances is turned on its head and regarded as total detachment. This is in sharp contrast with the view that Chômei takes of other kinds of attachment (shû).

Chômei tells the story, for instance, of a scholar of Chinese, Sukekuni, who loved flowers above all else. So deep was his attachment that he even composed a Chinese verse saying that he would continue to love flowers in his future lives as well. As it happened, he received rebirth as a butterfly as retribution for his obsession with flowers.\footnote{Ibid, p 70-2.} Chômei goes on to relate how a priest who was a serious follower of the Buddhist doctrine was nonetheless deeply in love with a mandarin orange tree. As a result of even this trivial attachment he was reborn a snake and lived at the foot of the orange tree. Chômei draws out the moral saying:

> There can be no doubt whatsoever that for every moment of deluded attachment we receive rebirth in a lowly animal form. Truly this should arouse in us the greatest fear.\footnote{Ibid, p 72.}
By the same token, Chōmei praises a certain priest who, finding himself too attached to a pot, decides to wipe out the root of his love by destroying the pot. So too he tells us of another priest who planted a plum tree and found that once it flowered he took pleasure in nothing else. Indeed he would scold anyone who happened to pluck the flowers off his tree. But one day he suddenly realised the gravity of his 'deluded attachment' (mōshū) and cut the tree down at its roots.

The passionate involvement of the sukimono in an artistic pursuit on the other hand, is always juxtaposed with a corresponding lack of concern for all other worldly matters and this gives Chōmei the basis for arguing that the sukimono naturally attains to a state of mind that can experience religious awakening (hosshin). In order to substantiate further his claim that the pursuit of the arts — of suki — is tantamount to religious practice, Chōmei narrates another story, this time about the famous Tendai priest Genshin and his conversion to the Way of Poetry.

Genshin believed that waka constituted the sin of kigo and thus refused to compose any poetry. Kigo (ornate language), as we have mentioned earlier, was regarded as one of the "sins of word" in Buddhism. One day, around daybreak, when Genshin stood gazing over Lake Biwa, the sight of the boats going back and forth, shrouded in mist, brought to his mind the poem, "To what shall I compare it, the daybreak..." At that moment he was deeply moved and affected by this experience and it caused him to say, "The sacred teachings and Japanese poetry are in fact identical" (shōgyō to waka to wa hayaku hitotsu narikeri). From that time onwards he would often recite and compose poems whenever an appropriate occasion arose.

55 Ibid, p 69.  
56 Ibid, p 69-70.  
Chōmei demonstrates that even for one as unreceptive to poetry as Genshin, it is this medium more than any other which enables him to capture the essence of what he sees and experiences. The sight of the boats plying back and forth on Lake Biwa spontaneously leads him to recall the poem by the priest Manzei, in which the latter compares human life to the boats travelling in the morning mist. More poignantly than any scriptural writing, it is *waka* which has the power to make Genshin intuit the truth of the transient nature of worldly existence. Genshin who had once dismissed *waka* as *kigo* is now forced to take a diametrically opposite view of the matter. He claims that no distinction can be made between Japanese poetry and the sacred teachings: both are equally effective in leading human beings to an understanding of Buddhist teachings.

An interesting example of a rather different conception of the relation of poetry to Buddhist practice can be seen in an alternative version of the story of Genshin’s conversion to poetry which appears in the *Shasekishū* by the priest Mujū Ichien. In this version Mujū relates how Genshin had a pupil who liked to compose poetry. Genshin disapproved of this and felt that the pupil was taking himself away from his real task, namely, the pursuit of serious religious studies, and that he would corrupt the other students with his ways. As a result he decided to have the boy sent home. The latter, quite unaware of these plans, stood on the verandah watching the moon. Cupping his hands as if he was going to scoop up some water, he recited the following poem:

\[
\begin{align*}
Te ni musubu & \quad \text{We live in a world} \\
Mizu ni yadoreru & \quad \text{Not knowing whether or not it is real} \\
Tsuki kage wa & \quad \text{Like the reflection of the moon} \\
Aru ka naki ka no & \quad \text{Resting in the water} \\
Yo ni mo sumu ka na & \quad \text{Which I hold in my hands.}
\end{align*}
\]

Genshin, Mujū tells us, was so deeply moved when he heard this that he took to composing *waka* himself afterwards.\(^{58}\) In the *Shasekishū* there is no mention of

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\(^{58}\) *Shasekishū*, pp 219-20.
Genshin equating the sacred teachings with poetry. Also Muju makes clear that, in his view, only poetry which serves the Buddhist cause can be justified. 59

Clearly there is much that distinguishes the way in which Muju Ichien and Chômei formulate their positions on the subject. Muju appears to make a distinction between poetry that does not put forward the Buddhist teachings, for example, love poetry which he sees as kyōgen kigo and poetry which consciously explicates or sheds light on some aspect of the Buddhist doctrine, that is to say, the role of poetry as expedient means. Chômei, as we have seen, takes a far more radical view of the matter.

Conclusion

In most of the stories dealing with artistic practices, particularly Japanese poetry and music, Chômei first of all equates total devotion to these pursuits with the ideal of suki. He then seeks to establish that the mastery of the ideal of suki leads to an intuitive understanding of the principle of transience and this in turn helps rid the mind of all attachment to wealth, fame and other temptations that tie human beings to the temporal world. Once such a state of mind is reached, Chômei claims, the ultimate goal — release from the cycle of births and deaths and the attainment of nirvana — comes closer at hand. It is within the framework of suki that he explains the spiritual purity of men like Eishū, Tokimitsu, Rennyō and other heroes of his tales.

And yet it is important to note that even within these stories, particularly in his more moralizing statements, Chômei is not easily able to assert that suki and the Dharma are one. He takes recourse to the Buddhist notion of expedient means and argues that artistic pursuits can be seen as a means, a support for reaching the Ultimate. With this idea of mediation, a hierarchy is inevitably established in which the religious goal takes supreme position while the arts can be justified only as a means to achieve this goal.

There is a structural disjuncture within the stories themselves which is of significance. The third person narrative, in which most of the stories are narrated, is a free and unambiguous celebration of the lives and deeds of various sukimono. But the authorial statements at the end of the stories have a rather different tone. Chōmei seems to lose some of his self-confidence and resorts to a more defensive style, arguing with imaginary adversaries about the validity of artistic practices as religious observances. Thus even when Chōmei boldly declares that waka is religious practice, as in the story about Hōnichi, he seeks to strengthen his argument by saying that waka can be depended upon (tayori) as a means to calm the mind and meditate on the evanescence of worldly life. So too in the story about Tokimitsu's devotion to music, he concludes by saying that suki can be specially depended upon (tayori) as a way to discard all thoughts to do with the material world.

I would argue that there is a contradiction in Chōmei's mind between his desire to prove the value of the sukimono for his own sake and his need to subsume it within a framework that is acceptable in Buddhist terms. The notion of expedient means is one way in which this conflict can be handled by Chōmei and many of his contemporaries. However, a sense of ambivalence remains a feature of Chōmei's work. Throughout the story about the hijiri Kakunō, for example, we can sense Chōmei's admiration for Kakunō, both for his devotion to music and the attainment of rebirth in the Pure Land that is attendant on it. And yet the authorial comment at the end of the story has a rather different tone. Chōmei's statement that any practice can become a religious practice if it is sincerely approached as such, is a far cry from the assertion made earlier of the essential oneness of the Way of music and the Way of the Buddha.

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60 Hosshinshū, p 276.
61 Ibid, p 275.
In almost all the stories that deal with the pursuit of an artistic practice, we sense the struggle of Chômei as a serious litterateur and dedicated Buddhist, seeking to bring together, if possible, the reigning aesthetic and religious ideals of his society. On occasion, as in the stories relating to Rennyô and othersukimono or in the statements where he equates the practice of music and poetry with the recitation of the nembutsu, the conflict seems settled. And yet, at other times, rather different statements emerge, seeking to defend these same 'deluded' practices and on one occasion even questioning the legitimacy of the very pursuits he has eulogized in other instances.

Thus we are told of a learned scholar of Chinese who fell seriously ill. When he had not long to live, a virtuous man who was to be his spiritual guide visited him and urged him to recite the nembutsu. However, the scholar's mind was so steeped in images of the wind and the moon (i.e. poetry), to which he had been excessively attached (yoshû) over the years, that he appeared to be unable to concentrate his thoughts on the Pure Land. The priest, who (we are told) was probably a man of great discernment, stopped recommending the nembutsu and for a while talked to the scholar about poetry and other subjects that interested him. When it looked as though the scholar was satisfied and felt greater confidence in the guide, the latter said:

For years now you have composed unexcelled verse. Undoubtedly you will leave behind Chinese poetry of the highest acclaim. What a pity that you have not composed a single verse (fu) on the Pure Land. It is true that there are many beautiful sights in this world which are hard to cast away. Imagine how many more poetic conceptions the beauties of the Pure Land will inspire within you.62

As the beauty of nature was deeply imprinted in the scholar's mind, he envisioned before him the Pure Land and the magnificence of this served as a means by which he was spiritually awakened. This led him to recite the nembutsu and he died as he would

have desired, with the knowledge that he would be reborn in the Pure Land. Chōmei concludes:

Some people say that this was a story about the monk Yasutane, but as he was a strict adherent of the religious path, I do not believe that at the moment of his death he would have let other thoughts interfere with his contemplation of the Pure Land.

In this story, Chōmei does not depict poetry as being in natural harmony with the Buddhist Path. Indeed, he stands the art in direct opposition to the religious ideal. It is 'excessive attachment' that hinders a man's ability to recite the nembutsu: "the monk Yasutane...would never have let other thoughts interfere with his contemplation of the Pure Land", least of all at the moment of death. Through the manoeuvres of the spiritual guide, poetry serves in the end as an expedient means that leads the scholar in the story to visualize the magnificence of the Pure Land and thereby arouses in him the desire to attain rebirth in the Pure Land. But there is nothing automatic about this. It testifies only to the skill (the 'discernment') of the priest. Poetry is efficacious in this instance. It is like any other expedient means, no better and no worse. The statement about the monk Yoshishige Yasutane, whom Chōmei admired greatly, is a categorical assertion of the superiority of the prescribed religious practices.

It is important to stress, nonetheless, that this is the only episode within the Hosshinshū in which Chōmei takes a negative view of poetry and sees it as a hindrance to the attainment of the Pure Land. For the most part, Chōmei consciously attempts to establish that religious awakening is the natural concomitant to the cultivation of suki.

Both the structure and the content of the Hosshinshū reveal the struggle of a man deeply involved in the artistic and cultural traditions of his society to find ways in which he can lead a life of a religious recluse and attain to the Buddhist ideals that he espouses. In doing so, however, he brings to bear many of the values and practices from the secular world that he has left behind on his interpretation of religious ideals. Chōmei's
attempt to bring together and integrate these two worlds is a recurring feature of the Hosshinshū and it appears to preoccupy him as much as the more explicit and acknowledged search for religious awakening.

CHAPTER VI
THE SUKIMONO AS RECLUSE: THE HOSHIKU

Introduction

We have seen that even in a relatively straightforward and realistic work such as the Hosshinshū, Chūgen carves out a special place for the artistic procedures that he describes, and asserts that they are equally to be harmonized with the religious quest that he consciously opposes. In the Hosshinshū, Chūgen continues to be concerned with many of the same questions that he addressed in the Hōjōki, supreme example of the nature and role of artistic procedure in the life of one who has chosen the Buddhist path.

Chūgen begins the Hōjōki with a long exposition on the general and fundamental disasters which have wracked the island over the years. The opening section is intended to serve as unquestionable proof of the basic unreality of worldly life. It also serves as the background against which we are to understand Chūgen's decision to reject the material world in favor of a life spent as a recluse for the sake of Buddhist truths. Chūgen then proceeds to describe his own life and work, one in which he has been free of all material constraints and material attachments. He shows himself as having renounced religious practices to the composing and recitation of poetry and the performance of musical melodies. Toward the end of the work, Chūgen engages in a dialogue between what he portrays as two personalities within himself. The uneducated mind resists his detached mind of still being trapped in worldly attachments, while concurrently carrying out the motions of living a holy life. The work ends on those of ambiguity and wonder which stand in contrast to the rational and self-restrained position with which Chūgen began.
CHAPTER VI

THE SUKIMONO AS RECLUSE: THE HÔJÔKI

Introduction

We have seen that even in a relatively straightforward and didactic work such as the Hosshinshū, Chômei carves out a special place for the artistic practices that he cherishes, and claims that they are totally in harmony with the religious goals that he consciously espouses. In the Hôjôki, Chômei continues to be concerned with many of the same questions that he addressed in the Hosshinshū, questions regarding the nature and role of artistic practices in the life of one who has chosen the Buddhist Path.

Chômei begins the Hôjôki with a long exposition on the natural and man-made disasters which have ravaged the capital over the years. The opening section is intended to serve as unquestionable proof of the basic impermanence of worldly life. It also serves as the background against which we can understand Chômei's decision to reject the material world in favour of a life spent as a recluse on top of Mount Toyama. Chômei then proceeds to describe his own life-style, one in which he is free of all social constraints and material attachments. He shows himself moving easily from religious practices to the composition and recitation of poetry and the performance of musical melodies. Towards the end of the work, Chômei engages in a dialogue between what he portrays as two personalities within himself. His enlightened mind accuses his deluded mind of still being steeped in worldly attachments, while outwardly carrying out the motions of living a holy life. The work ends on a note of ambiguity and tension which stands in contrast to the relaxed and self-assured posture with which Chomei began.
In the *Hōjōki* Chōmei focuses on his own life in dealing with the potential contradiction between activities that can be seen as belonging to two different realms, namely, the 'religious' and the 'mundane'. The 'religious' is the life that Chōmei has chosen as a recluse living away from society and aspiring to a state of mind conducive to enlightenment. The 'mundane' encapsulates his abiding interest in poetry and music, in the beauty of his natural surroundings and his love of his ten-foot-square hut. It is by situating the tension between these two realms within the context of his own life that Chōmei develops and pursues another extremely interesting perspective in his continued search for an ideal life, one that incorporates both the Ways of Music and Poetry and the Way of the Buddha.

Chōmei draws on the *Vimalakirti* sutra and Yoshishige Yasutane's *Chiteiki* (*Record of the Pond Pavilion*), using these texts as unmentioned but easily recognizable points of reference in presenting his own dilemma — the dilemma of reconciling worldly pursuits and attachments with a commitment to Buddhist ideals and practices. It is necessary, therefore, to examine the *Hōjōki* within the context of the literary and religious traditions to which it is linked.

**The Vimalākirti Sutra**

Chōmei begins the *Hōjōki* with the well-known and oft-quoted passage, "The flow of the river is ceaseless and the water never the same. The bubbles that float in the pools vanish and form again but they are not known to last long: so too in the world are man and his dwellings." 1 This passage echoes the following words of the Vimalākirti sutra, "This body is like a mass of foam which is intangible. It is like a bubble which does not last long...It is like a dream...a shadow...an echo...a floating cloud...lightning." 2 Chōmei's choice of this sutra was not fortuitous. In building a ten-foot

1  *Hōjoki* p.15.

square hut (hojō) and attempting to lead a life of spiritual purity, Chōmei consciously uses the figure of the layman / bodhisattva Vimalākirti as his model. Towards the end of the Hōjōki Chōmei refers directly to Vimalākirti and reproaches himself for having followed him in form alone; while living in a ten-foot-square hut that resembles that of Vimalākirti’s he has, as he puts it, continued to be even more deluded than the most foolish of the Buddha’s disciples.

However, Chōmei does more than merely echo occasional phrases from the Vimalākirti sutra. As I try to show presently, both the structure and meaning of the Hōjōki derive from a conscious adaptation of this highly popular Buddhist text. This sutra is an account of the teachings of the layman Vimalākirti who lived in the city of Vaisali in India during the time of the Sakyamuni Buddha. Although he is a wealthy householder, Vimalākirti’s spiritual state is that of a bodhisattva. It is in order to save human beings that he stays on in Vaisali and continues to live the life of a householder. Although a layman, Vimalākirti is free from all attachments to the three worlds. Although married with children, he lives a pure life. Although he eats and drinks, he delights in tasting the flavour of meditation. While he knows the worldly classics, he always takes joy in the Buddha’s Dharma. The sutra explains that Vimalākirti uses a variety of expedient means (upaya) for the benefit of sentient beings. It is for this reason that he is able to enter a house of prostitution and there preach the Dharma by revealing the sin of sexual intercourse.

The sutra tells us that as one of his upaya, Vimalākirti takes on the appearance of illness. This attracts thousands of people, including kings, ministers, and officials to his bed-side. Using his illness as a metaphor for the impermanence of the body and of worldly possessions, he teaches them about pain and suffering. When Sakyamuni hears of his illness he asks his disciples to pay him a visit and inquire after his health. However none of his disciples feel up to the task of engaging in a philosophical debate with Vimalākirti, and all of them, under one pretext or another, excuse themselves.
Finally the Buddha turns to Manjusri, "the one of superior wisdom", and the latter agrees to visit Vimalākirti, accompanied by eight thousand bodhisattvas, five hundred sravakas and hundreds and thousands of devas.

Vimalākirti knows in advance of their arrival, and using his transcendental powers, he empties his house of all attendants and all furniture except his sick bed. What ensues is a dialogue between Manjusri and Vimalākirti, and the sutra reaches its climax in the chapter on non-duality. After those who have accompanied Manjusri offer their definitions of non-duality, Manjusri proffers his own opinion, "When all things are no longer within the province of either word or speech, and of either indication or knowledge and are beyond questions and answers, this is initiation into the non-dual Dharma (funi hōmon)." Then Manjusri asks Vimalākirti to tell everyone present his own view of non-duality. Vimalākirti's answer is to keep completely silent. At this point Manjusri exclaims,"Excellent, excellent; can there be true initiation into the non-dual Dharma until words and speech are no longer written or spoken?" This is what came to be known as the famed silence of Vimalākirti.

In his article. "Ren-in Hōjōki no ron", Professor Imanari has convincingly demonstrated the deep structural affinities between the Hōjōki and the Vimalākirti sutra. For instance, in developing the theme of evanescence (mujō) in the first half of the Hōjōki, Chōmei turns directly to the Vimalākirti sutra, which says,

[This body] is ownerless for it is like the earth. It is egoless for it is like fire. It is transient like the wind. It is not human for it is like water. It is unreal and depends on the four elements for its existence. It is empty, being neither ego nor its object.

3 The Vimalakirti nirdesa sutra, p.100.
6 The Vimalakirti nirdesa sutra, p.18.
Imanari finds the reference in the *Hōjōki* to the four elements (*shidai*) significant, and suggests that Chōmei has this passage in mind when he speaks of human suffering. It is through a long account of actual disasters that happened in Chōmei's own lifetime, afflictions directly caused by these four elements, that he illustrates the theme of *mujo*. In the second half of the work, Chōmei describes the joys of living the life of a recluse as contrasted with life in society. In the last passage of the work however, Chōmei questions his own claims to spiritual purity and castigates himself for continuing to be deeply steeped in worldly attachment. It is the final passage of the *Hōjōki*, according to Imanari, that resolves the dichotomy between the two worlds that Chōmei posits. This is achieved by transcending verbal discourse and resorting to silence, which is of course also the climactic ending of the Vimalākirti sutra.

Imanari argues that Chōmei is very much aware that his decision to lead the life of a recluse has divided the world falsely into two parts — the secular and the religious. This is a deliberate play on the life of Vimalākirti, who, although a layman, is able to counter the discriminating dualizing questions that are posed by the intellect with a profound silence: proof of his understanding of the doctrine of non-duality. For Imanari then, it is in order to illuminate the doctrine of non-duality that Chōmei constructs a work in which he first sees himself and his life in terms of dichotomies and then resolves them by abandoning words in the manner of Vimalākirti. Chōmei's elaborate description of the pleasures of the solitary life in the midst of nature is, for Imanari, a clever device, Chōmei's own use of *upaya* to illustrate the profundity of the doctrine of non-duality. We shall have more to say about Imanari's reading of the *Hōjōki* later in the chapter. The importance of his argument lies in demonstrating that Chōmei does not merely allude at random to the Vimalākirti sutra, but uses both the structure and the teachings of the text as a constant point of reference in order to enrich the scope of his own work.
We have mentioned earlier that Chōmei's choice of a ten-foot square hut is inspired by the dwelling that Vimalākirti lived in when he was taken ill and explicated the doctrine of non-duality. The sutra itself makes no mention of this hut, but merely points out that Vimalākirti emptied his house of all furniture and belongings and left himself nothing but his sick bed. Chōmei's attribution of a ten-foot square hut to Vimalākirti stems from another source — the widespread currency of a story about Vimalākirti in China and its incorporation into the Buddhist lore of Japan. The story goes that when the pilgrim Wang Hsuan-t'ēse passed the ruins of a small cottage in India, he was told that it was in this modest dwelling that Vimalākirti had debated with Manjusri. Amazed, he measured the foundations and found them to be ten-foot square. This was the basis for a practice that became popular in T'ang China, one of Buddhist dignitaries and lay scholars going into seclusion and living in a fang chang (hōjō). This tale about the extremely modest proportions of Vimalākirti's abode lay behind the desire of the Buddhist recluses (inja) of Chōmei's times to live in a ten-foot square hut.

The hōjō came to be a symbol of one's rejection of the world of ostentation and of one's genuine commitment to the Buddhist Path. The practice of recording one's personal reflections from the seclusion of the hōjō gained ground in Japan during Chōmei's times, and is reflected in the postscripts that rounded off some of the setsuwa collections written by Chōmei's contemporaries. The author of the Senjūshō, for instance, wrote in the epilogue to his work that he had recorded these stories in his ten-foot square hut (hōjō no io ni te shirushi owai). Similarly in the Kankyō no tomo we are told that the author compiled the work in a ten-foot square hut of grass on the

8 Senjūshō, p.414.
peaks of Nishiyama (Nishiyama no mine no hōjō no kusa no iori ni te shirushi owarinu).^9

As the title of Chōmei’s work suggests, the Hojoki is an account of his life spent in a ten-foot square hut. The form that Chōmei uses in writing this work is the ki. The ki orji as it was known in Chinese, was a well-established genre of Chinese writing, and this literary tradition also shapes the form and content of Chōmei’s work.

The Chiteiki

The ji was a kind of chronicle or account of events that were presented objectively and which purported to being authentic. Among the works written in this genre which played a major influence on writing in Japan was the Hyakuhinshū Goteiki, by Po Chu'i. The author begins by setting out the circumstances that lead to his moving to a new dwelling. This is followed by a description of his new environment and of the emotional state of mind that this move engenders.

In Japan, works written in Chinese such as the Shosaiki by Sugawara Michizane and the Chiteiki by Yoshishige Yasutane followed the same structure as Po Chu'i’s work. The central focus of these works was the authors’ move to their new dwellings— an account of the physical dimensions of their homes followed by a more introspective probing into themselves in their new environment. It is as much to these works as to the Vimalàkirti sutra that Chōmei turns to in order to create a work in the ki form. Chōmei was the first writer to use this form to compose a text which was written in Japanese, in the style called wakankonkōbun; a text which came to be recognized as a literary masterpiece. Centuries later, the noted poet Bashō paid homage to Chōmei’s work by writing the Genjuan no ki, in which he rerendered many of the themes that had been central to the Hojōki.

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It is perhaps a reflection of the strong influence of the writings of Po Chu'i in Japan that Chõmei too focuses on the human dwelling and not on illness (unlike the Vimalākirti sutra) as the metaphor for impermanence. The overriding concern with the dwelling is a striking feature of Chõmei's work. This was perhaps born out of a feature specific to Chomei's times, namely the easily destructible quality of wooden houses in the face of earthquakes and fires, and the acute shortage of space in the capital. Whatever the reasons, it is noteworthy that it is the home which is picked out as a symbol of ephemerality even more than the individual who dwells within it.

Indeed even while Chõmei's spiritual ideal may well have been Vimalākirti, in writing the Hōjōki he draws more directly on the Chiteiki and models himself on its author Yoshishige Yasutane, a figure who is more readily accessible, closer to home, and perhaps one that presents the possibility of an ideal that can be realized. It would be useful to look closely at the Chiteiki in order to identify not only the elements that this work shares with the Hōjōki, but more importantly, the areas in which the Hōjōki departs from its model. Such an exercise may help shed some light on an abiding feature of Chõmei's work, namely, the ambivalence and tension he experiences in trying to lead a life that he finds acceptable as a 'Buddhist' while at the same time retaining values and aesthetic practices that defined his life as a courtier.

The Chiteiki or "Record of the Pond Pavilion" is a work in which Yasutane describes his life in a house which he built whilst still in court service. This is in marked contrast with Chõmei's Hōjōki, which is an account of Chõmei's life after he had left the 'secular' world and become a recluse living in Hino. For Yasutane, his house comes to symbolize a private domain of his life, a domain in which he is able to pursue his activities as a scholar and a Buddhist without conforming to the norms and restrictions that rule his social life.

Yasutane begins with a description of the uncertainty of human dwellings and the vagaries of fortune that affect those living in the capital. His choice of a small house
built on some waste land is prompted mainly by two practical considerations. He cannot afford to buy anything bigger because of the price of land; and it is a recognition of the fact that such a house is in keeping with his social station.

The various buildings that comprise Yasutane's dwelling are situated around a small pond which was built by filling up a natural hollow in the land. To the west of the pond Yasutane locates a little temple in which he places a statue of the Amida Buddha. To the east of the pond he builds a little mansion which he makes his study, and to the north of the pond he has a pavilion constructed in which he houses his wife and children. It is worth quoting at some length Yasutane's description of his own activities in the various parts of his pond pavilion.

Although by profession I hold the position of Imperial Secretary, my heart dwells in the midst of the mountains. I entrust my position and title to fate, for the workings of Heaven govern all things alike. I do not seek to leave the world like the phoenix that soars up high in the winds, nor do I wish to seclude myself like the leopard that hides away in the mountain mists. I would not be a sycophant, bowing and scraping before great generals and princes. Nor do I see the need to give up the use of words or abandon carnal desires and imprint my traces in some deep mountain or dark valley. When at court my body complies temporarily with my court duties. When at home my heart returns permanently to the Buddha. When I go out to court I don my grass-green official robe, and although my post is a minor one, I enjoy a certain measure of honour. Inside the house I wear white hempen garments, warmer than spring, purer than snow. I begin the day by washing my hands and rinsing my mouth, and then go into the western prayer hall where I intone the name of the Amida Buddha and read the Lotus Sutra. After my meal I go into the eastern chamber to open my books and communicate with worthy men of the past. For instance, I regard as my master the Emperor Han Wen Ti, a ruler of another era, who upheld frugality and brought peace to his people. Then there is my teacher of another age, Po Lo-t'ien of the Tang period, who composed unexcelled verse and used it as a means to follow the Buddha's Dharma; or the Seven Sages of the Chin period, friends of another age, who lived at court but whose hearts dwelt in seclusion away from the world. So I keep the company of the virtuous ruler, the great teacher and sagacious
friends. In one day I encounter the three and I enjoy three delights to last a lifetime. As for the affairs of men in the present age, they hold no attraction for me...10

The physical layout of Yasutane's house corresponds directly with the neat division that he makes in his personal life between his religious and secular activities. The western pavilion, quite appropriately, facing as it does Amida's Western Paradise, becomes the place where he performs his religious observances. In the eastern pavilion he engages in his study of the classics, of poetry and other works that define his identity as a scholar of Chinese. Even while he compartmentalizes his time and the physical space where he carries out his activities, what is striking is his portrayal of a total harmony between his commitment to Buddhist practices on the one hand, and his involvement with the study of classical texts on the other.

Indeed the meaningful dichotomy for Yasutane, at least in the Chiteiki, is not so much the one between the religious and the mundane as the one he draws between the public and the private realms of his life, and the higher value that he assigns to his private world. Thus he asserts that although his profession demands that he work at court and that he take part in public activities, his innermost inclination is to retire within himself — his heart dwells in seclusion in the midst of the mountains. Later in the same passage, he expresses the same thought when he claims that while he is at court his body complies temporarily with his court duties, but once he is back home his heart returns enduringly to thoughts of the Buddha. The statement is made again symbolically when he says that while his official robes are grass green, in accordance with his social rank, at home he wears a simple white hempen robe.

The division that Yasutane makes between the body that dwells without and the heart which operates at the personal level, the contrast between the official court robes

and the pure hempen robe, the latter being "warmer than spring and purer than snow", all point to the ascendancy of the private over the public in Yasutane's vision. It is his private world that allows him to engage meaningfully in Buddhist practices and to immerse himself in those works among the Chinese classics that he finds most appealing. Of these, he admires the Emperor Han Wen Ti for his sterling Confucian virtues. Po Lo-t'ien (another name for Po Ch'ui), on the other hand, he admires for using his commitment to poetry as a means to serve the Buddhist cause. The seven Taoist sages exemplify for Yasutane the successful integration of public and private realms, through which the innermost core of the heart can remain untouched by the petty concerns of daily life.

These figures from the Chinese past enable Yasutane to retreat into his ideal world and detach himself from the preoccupations and activities of his contemporaries, whom he sees as falling far short of the wisdom of former times. Yasutane draws on a whole range of values that emanate from both Confucian and Buddhist principles to create the possibility of a harmonious co-existence between the outer and inner domains of his life. His strong Confucian training makes him affirm his presence within the mundane world, and accept unquestioningly his place within the social hierarchy and the kind of dwelling this affords him. It is this strong sense of the value of the 'here and now' which leads him to decry any extremist stand. He sees no reason why he should leave the world 'like the phoenix that soars up in the winds' or seclude himself 'like the leopard that hides away in the mountain mists'.

The position that Yasutane holds, namely living as a layman within society while at the same time being detached from it by retreating into the world of Buddhist practice within his private life, finds its theoretical justification in Mahayana Buddhist practice, symbolized particularly in the life of the layman/bodhisattva Vimalākirti. Indeed, from the Six Dyanasties period onwards in China, Vimalākirti provided the framework for legitimizing the life of a good Confucian householder who dutifully carried out his role
in society, but who in his private life claimed a certain detachment from worldly concerns and found the possibility of retreating into himself, pursuing Taoist and Buddhist practices.

It is Yasutane's successful synthesis of religious practices and secular duties, in the manner of Vimalākirti, that allows Chōmei to draw inspiration for his own writing from the *Chiteiki*. Chōmei appears to draw a direct correlation between the 'religious' and what Yasutane conceptualizes as the private, and correspondingly between the 'mundane' and the public domain. While such a correspondence between the 'religious' and the private and the 'mundane' and the public does underly Yasutane's work, it is noteworthy that the study of the classics and of poetry is as much part of Yasutane's activities within the confines of his home as is his recitation of the *nembutsu* and the Lotus sutra. What Yasutane extrapolates from the texts that he upholds is both sound practical Confucian morals as well as the Buddhist ideal of the transcendence of the spiritual over the material world, and the possibility of creating a space for the spiritual domain while still living in the realm of the mundane.

Yasutane's retreat into his inner world finds expression in his love of his home. Having expressed his disappointment with the affairs of men who are his contemporaries, he goes on to say, "I lock my gates, I shut the doors and alone I sing, alone I recite poetry...I love my home and I care for nothing outside it."¹¹ This, as we shall see later, has striking resonances with Chōmei's own sense of pleasure at being cut off from the world, free to pursue his love of music and poetry in seclusion, heedless of the praise or censure of society. And yet it is at this point that there is a major divergence between the two, in the way in which they conceptualize the relationship between themselves and their dwelling.

¹¹ *Chiteiki*, p.426; "Record of the Pond Pavilion", p.63.
It is after expressing his love for his home that Yasutane approaches what is the opening theme of Chōmei's *Hojōki* — the essential transience of human habitation and of those who live in it. He speaks of the wastefulness of spending money on lavish homes, and of the futility of doing so since life is far too short for anyone to live in them for long. Having acknowledged at the philosophical level the basic impermanence of human beings and their dwellings, Yasutane returns to a line of reasoning which stems from his Confucian sense of the 'here and now'. He explains that he has built himself a small home only towards the end of his life.

What is most striking however, is the way that Yasutane brings the *Chiteiki* to a close. Nowhere in the *Chiteiki* does Yasutane conceive of his own involvement with his dwelling in Buddhist terms, as "deluded attachment". What he resorts to instead is a neat Confucian solution in which he rejects the physical, the material structure that makes for a dwelling, and postulates instead an alternate architecture built on solid Confucian principles. The final passage of the *Chiteiki* is interesting for what it tells us of the way in which Yasutane falls back on certainties. These sometimes read as platitudes, and contrast very sharply indeed with Chōmei's complex grappling with what he sees as contradictions that cannot be ignored. Yasutane writes:

Ah, when the wise man builds his house, he causes no expense to the people, no trouble to the spirits. He uses benevolence and righteousness for his ridgepole and beam, ritual and law for his pillar and basestone, truth and virtue for a gate and door, mercy and love for a wall and hedge. Frugality takes the place of household goods and the piling up of good deeds becomes the accumulation of property. When one lives in a house built of such materials, no fire can consume it, no wind can topple it, no misfortune appear to threaten it, no disaster come in its way ... A household such as this will prosper of its own accord and the master will enjoy longevity. Office and rank will be with it forever, to be handed down to sons and grandsons. How can one fail, then, to exercise caution?

Ibid, p.428; Ibid, p.64.

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Here Yasutane's concern is one that has little to do with the other-worldly. In creating a conception of a new home which is constructed out of Confucian morality, what he denounces are the vices of greed and love of luxury that drive men and women to possess beautiful homes. But nowhere does he question the essential value of life in this world and of the material ideals and aspirations of people who live in it. Thus he assures his readers that those who build their homes with the Confucian teachings as their ethical guides will enjoy the greatest degree of material comfort and security—prosperity, longevity and immortality (through an unbroken line of progeny).

This repeated evocation of Confucian principles places Yasutane's account of his house and his activities in it on a radically different plane from Chômei's own descriptions of his life in the Hôjôki. It needs to be stressed, however, that there are no indications in the Hôjôki of Chômei's views on this aspect of Yasutane's work. Indeed he makes no reference to Yasutane or the Chiteiki.

In the Hosshinshû however, there is a lengthy episode about Yasutane in which Chômei extols Yasutane as a figure whose outstanding quality is his ability to be totally committed to the Buddhist Path while remaining involved in the social activities of the mundane world. In this context Chômei refers directly to the Chiteiki, saying, "It is because Yasutane had such a heart that in his literary work, the Chiteiki too, he wrote, 'Although my body is exposed to the sun (i.e. works at court) my heart dwells in the shade (i.e in seclusion)."13

Yasutane conceptualizes a dichotomy within himself which he identifies as body and mind, but he maintains that the two, while engaging in different pursuits, coexist in harmony. He also seems to acknowledge the transcendence of the spiritual realm that his mind enables him to maintain over the worldly activities that his body is obliged to carry out. However he sees no reason to abandon one for the other — the two do not

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13 Hosshinshû, p.96.
interfere with each other as long as he can maintain the autonomy of his mind, which even while living in the world can be secluded from it. In Chōmei's own writings too, the distinction between the body and the mind is a crucial one, and it is clear that for him the mind is the domain within an individual that can be trained and harnessed to the Buddhist cause. The body, by contrast, is the seat of deluded attachment and must not be indulged. In the Hōjōki, however, he expresses reservations about the mind itself, and the harmonious co-existence of worldly and religious activities is eventually called into question through a dialogue between Chōmei and his other self, that is to say, between his two minds. For Chōmei the matter is by no means one that can be resolved with ease.

Chomei's Hōjō and its Physical Surroundings

In the Hōjōki, Chōmei, whilst departing in significant ways from the Chiteiki, uses it nonetheless in order to highlight the problem that is central to his work, namely, the place of 'worldly' activities in the life of one who has chosen a life devoted to religion. A large part of the Hōjōki is devoted to recounting the natural and man-made disasters that ravaged the capital during Chōmei's times. As I pointed out earlier, Chōmei's narration of these calamities is motivated by his desire to establish the essential ephemerality (mujō) of all human beings and their belongings. He writes:

Human beings who are born and then die, where do they come from and where do they go to? We know not. For whom do they torment themselves, building houses that they can live in only temporarily? For what reason do their eyes take pleasure in these dwellings? This too we do not know. Both the master and his dwelling vie with each other in their ephemerality, in a manner no different from the dew on the morning glory. For instance, the dew falls and the flower remains — remains only to be withered the following morning. On occasion
the flower fades and the dew remains. However it does not wait for
the evening.\footnote{Hōjōki, pp15-6. See also Keene, Donald. Anthology of Japanese Literature, Penguin Classics, Chaucer Press Ltd, 1968, pp.189-90.}

It is noteworthy that while Yasutane also speaks of the destruction of splendid
mansions in the capital, and of the misery of the poor who live there, he fails to
extrapolate the principle of mujō from his observations. For him human misery arises
out of avarice, stubbornness and cruelty. Chōmei's interest, on the other hand, lies in
establishing the principle of the essential transience of the world. It is for this reason
that in his enumeration of the disasters that hit the capital, natural calamities are at the
forefront, while major political upheavals that took place in his youth, such as the Heiji
and Hōgen insurrections, find no place in the Hōjōki.

There are several passages in the Hōjōki which closely follow the Chiteiki. What
emerges however, even in these instances, reveals the rather different perspectives from
which these works have been written. Yasutane writes:

One branch of a family living south of the avenue is poor, another
branch north of the avenue is rich, and although the rich relatives are
not necessarily virtuous, the poor relatives still must suffer shame.
Then there are the humble folk who live in the shadow of some
powerful family; their roof is broken but they don't dare thatch it,
their wall collapses but they don't dare build it up again. Even when
they are enjoying themselves they dare not laugh out aloud. So too
when they grieve they cannot raise their voices and weep ...
Indeed
their state is like that of sparrows in the presence of hawks and
falcon.\footnote{Chiteiki, p.419; "Record of the Pond Pavilion", p.59.}

He elaborates further the plight of the poor:

And how much worse when some great mansion is first built and
then begins bit by bit to broaden its gates and doors, swallowing up
the little huts all around. Then how many of the poor people have
occasion to complain, like sons forced to leave the home of their
ancestors, like officials of paradise exiled to the dusty world of men.\textsuperscript{16}

Yasutane rounds up his assessment of the situation in the capital with the following statement, "Surely there must be some empty plot of land between the eastern and western capital. Why do people have to be so obdurate?" Clearly, Yasutane's analysis of the hardships that people face in the capital leads him to focus essentially on social problems of human degradation, and leads to a Confucian sense of outrage at the inhumanity and obstinacy of human beings. Chômei's reflections, as we shall see from the passage that follows, derive from a view of the world which is guided by Buddhist rather than Confucian principles:

As I have remarked earlier, what makes life hard to endure in this world is the helpless and undependable character of the human self and of his/her dwelling. And if we add to that the griefs that particular circumstances and our social station bring on us, their sum would be incalculable. When a person of no consequence lives next to a rich and powerful man, however happy he may be, he cannot celebrate too loudly; no matter how grief-stricken, he cannot weep aloud. He displays anxiety in his every action and he lives in fear like the swallow who approaches the falcon's nest. The poor man who lives next to a wealthy man is constantly ashamed of his wretched appearance and makes his entries and exits in an ingratiating manner ... Those who are powerful are full of greed, and those who stand alone are treated with contempt. Those who possess great wealth live in fear while those who are destitute are given to feelings of jealousy. Those who rely on others become their slaves, while those who provide support to others become fettered by their affections. Those who follow the ways of the world feel constrained and those who do not appear deranged. Where can one make one's home, what kind of activity can one do that will provide even for a moment some haven for the body and some solace for the mind?\textsuperscript{17}

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Ibid}, p.419; \textit{Ibid}, p.59.
\item \textit{Hojōki}, pp.27-8.
\end{itemize}
In speaking of the grief and hardships that particular material circumstances bring on human beings, Chômei relies heavily on Yasutane's Chiteiki, particularly when he provides the example of the plight of the poor who find themselves the neighbours of the rich. When he speaks of their fear and trepidation towards the wealthy he uses Yasutane's expression, "they are like swallows approaching the falcon's nest." And yet despite this borrowing from the Chiteiki, the similarities between these two passages are superficial, because the central message that the authors convey is based on radically divergent premises. Fundamentally, Chômei is not concerned with human misery and suffering as a condition arising out of material circumstances. The neatly balanced parallelism of the passage describing the suffering of both the rich and the poor, of those who are dependent on others and equally of those who provide them with patronage, of those who conform to the norms of society and those who wish to break out of them, points to Chômei's perception of human suffering as something which is inherent in the human condition, irrespective of one's place in the social hierarchy. As a Buddhist, Chômei would argue that this condition could only be transcended through an understanding of the deluded nature of worldly attachments.

Chômei's catalogue of calamity and destruction in the Hōjōki provide him with the material to reflect on the "helpless and undependable character of the self and of the dwelling", or to put it in other words, on the transience of human life and possessions. It is this deep awareness of the ephemerality of human existence which permeates the whole work and sets it apart from the Chiteiki. This awareness also functions as Chômei's professed impetus for rejecting worldly life and choosing to live as a religious recluse in Hino. Chômei recounts his transition from living in his ancestral home to building a modest cottage for himself, culminating in his leaving the capital altogether and retreating into a ten-foot square hut. For Chomei, then, the dwelling becomes a metaphor for the worldly attachments which he tries to cast off. Yasutane on the other
hand, describes his home and his activities in it without treating it primarily as a symbol of ephemerality.

Chōmei explains that he spent several years living in the house of his paternal grandmother. However, around the age of thirty he had to leave his ancestral home as a result of having fallen on hard times. At this point Chōmei chose to build himself a house that was barely one-tenth the size of his earlier dwelling. He writes:

This house was only one-tenth the size of the place that I had lived in earlier. I constructed a dwelling where there was barely room to live in, one which could hardly be called a proper home. Although I did build a mud wall around it, I did not hold a position which would allow me to put up an ornamental gate. I built a rough shed of bamboo posts for my carriage. Whenever there was a snowfall or the gales blew, the place was not without hazards. Since the house was near the river banks, it faced great danger from floods as well as bandits.18

Chōmei explains that after having borne the hardships of the impermanent world for thirty years he decided to leave his home and the capital and become a priest. In Chōmei's progressive move towards casting aside worldly attachments, becoming a priest is clearly a major landmark. However the first five years after taking the tonsure are ones that Chōmei is loathe to speak about. All we get in the Hōjōki is the cryptic statement, "I spent five forlorn years in the cloud-covered hills of Ōhara."19 The move to the ten-foot-square hut took place after this period in Ōhara, when Chōmei was sixty years old. This lodging was intended to serve "the last leaves of his life", at a time when his life was "about to evaporate like dew." Borrowing almost verbatim from the Chiteiki, he suggests, not without irony, that his decision to fashion a hut for his last years was like "the traveler who has found an inn along the road, an old silkworm who has made

18 Ibid, p.29.
19 Ibidem.
himself a solitary cocoon."\textsuperscript{20} Chōmei then goes on to explain that his ten-foot square hut was not even a hundredth the size of the house in which he had spent his middle years. It is as if by drawing up a correspondence between the progressive shrinking of the size of his dwelling and his own advancing age, Chōmei implies his own natural progression from 'attachment' to 'detachment'.

In order to stress the inconsequential nature of his worldly possession, his home, Chōmei describes its smallness, and then minimizes its semblance to permanence by pointing to its quality of mobility. (The house was built on hinges and could be dismantled at short notice and put up in a new place, rather in the manner of a tent used by a camper). To emphasize further his lack of concern with stability and security, he points out that he did not choose this particular spot rather than some other to set up his hut, and that he did not think of any piece of land as his own possession. "If there was anything that I found displeasing, I would easily be able to move my hut to another place."\textsuperscript{21}

This description of the physical dimensions and outward aspect of his ten-foot square hut is followed by an account of its lay-out within. Like Yasutane, Chōmei's division of the physical space within his dwelling and the objects that he places within it correspond with the two spheres of activity that he prizes most highly and which define his existence as a recluse. The west being the direction of the Pure Land becomes the place where he places his 'Buddhist' materials, such as his images of the Amida and of Fugen and his copy of the Lotus sutra. To the east he has his bed which, by virtue of the fact that it is made up of only stacks of fern, is entirely make-shift, suggesting Chōmei's total lack of interest in material comforts. On the south-western side of the room, on the other hand, he places objects which carry much greater weight and appear to be on a par with the iconographic representations which symbolize Chōmei's deep

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, p.30.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibidem.
commitment to Buddhist practices. These objects belong to the world of the arts, and make their appearance in the form of books on poetry and music and his musical instruments such as the koto and the biwa. It is in this section of his hut that he also places a copy of the Ōjōyōshū.

The Ōjōyōshū was a compilation of the sayings of the priest Genshin, said to have been put together in 985. It is interesting that it is among his works on poetry and music that Chômei chooses to place the Ōjōyōshū, a text that belongs properly to the space that we have termed 'religion'. A tempting speculation which might explain this placement of the Ōjōyōshū is that unlike the Lotus sutra which was a highly respected, 'official' Buddhist text, the Ōjōyōshū, being a derivative text, a Japanese reinterpretation of the Buddhist teachings written only a hundred and seventy years before Chômei's birth, was able to occupy a place amongst a more intimate and personal collection of Chômei's favorite works.

Chômei's Life as a Sukimono

After describing the contents of his hut, Chômei moves on to an account of his daily activities on Mount Toyama. What is particularly striking here is the way in which Chômei presents himself as moving freely from religious practice to an enjoyment of artistic pursuits, with one following the other 'naturally', without any sense of contradiction or tension. Chômei writes:

When I tire of reciting the nembutsu or cannot fix my mind on reading the sutras, there is nothing that prevents me from resting or being indolent. There is no one who can censure me or cause me to feel ashamed. Although I do not specially attempt to observe the religious discipline of silence, living alone as I do, I automatically refrain from committing the sins of speech. Even when I do not go out of my way to observe the religious injunctions, my circumstances are such that there is no occasion to break them. If of a morning I liken myself to the white waves that the passing boats leave in their wake, I gaze at the boats going to and fro from Okonoya and I capture the sentiments of the poet Manzei and recite...
the poem that he composed. When of an evening the wind rustles through the leaves of the cassia trees, I call to mind the estuary of Junnyō and, imitating the style of Gen Tōtoku, I play on my lute. If I am in the mood for more, I occasionally play the autumn wind melody to the accompaniment of the autumn breeze rustling through the pines, or perform the "melody of the running stream" (ryūsen) to the sound of the water. Although my artistic accomplishments are mean, I do not play to bring pleasure to others. I play and sing by myself, only for the comfort of my own heart.22

Running through this entire passage is Chōmei’s sense of liberation from the norms and rules that govern the lives of people who function within society, even those who have chosen religious vocations and live in monastic institutions. Chōmei proclaims, almost rebelliously, that he does not have to force himself to recite the sutras or the Amida Buddha’s name if he feels disinclined to do so. He can allow himself the liberty of resting or doing nothing at all, without having to face the critical gaze of the world. As if in anticipation of the criticism that this stance might provoke in his readers, who could well perceive it as evidence of deluded self-indulgence, Chōmei defends himself by saying that he does not need to specially perform religious practices because his life-style itself enables him, in the most natural manner, to lead a life which is in harmony with the Buddhist Dharma.

By defending his own rather idiosyncratic approach to traditional Buddhist practices, Chōmei paves the way for a justification of his engagement with poetry and music. When he says that he does not go out of his way to observe the religious injunctions because the kind of life he leads ensures that he does nothing to break them, he has in mind not only his physical isolation from society and its corrupt practices, but equally his involvement in artistic practices which he claims are deeply consonant with the ‘religious’ life that he strives to lead.

22 Ibid, p.32.
As we have seen, it is poetry in particular that Chōmei singles out as a religious practice par excellence in many of his stories in the *Hosshinshū*. In explicating why poetry deserves to be accorded a special place as a gyō (religious practice), he writes:

> How much more so then, because the Way of Poetry is one which can penetrate to the essence of things, we can depend on it and through this medium, calm the mind and meditate on the transience of all worldly things.23

A priest that Chōmei eulogizes in the *Hosshinshū* is Hōnichi, who made the recitation of three poems at dawn, noon and dusk his three religious practices of the day (*sanji no gyō*), in the firm belief that this was the way to meditate on the transience of life.24 For Chōmei poetry is inseparably linked with a deep awareness of the ephemerality of all worldly things. By Chōmei’s times, mujō had indeed come to be a central theme in Japanese poetry, especially in poems on the changing seasons and on nature in general. Litterateurs of this period saw mujō as a fundamental Buddhist principle whose spirit was best captured and understood through poetry. Thus in the *Hōjōki*, when Chōmei reflects on the ephemerality of his own condition, he conceptualizes it in poetic terms. He has the poem by the priest Manzei in mind when he likens himself to the white ripples that appear fleetingly on the water’s surface as the boats ply the lake. Gazing at the boats going to and fro from Okonoya, he puts himself in the same mood as Manzei and recites the latter’s composition.

In this kind of engagement with poetry we can identify a number of stages. Chōmei begins with what he regards as a fundamental Buddhist premise — ephemerality. An awareness of this principle is brought home to him through the medium of poetry. Once he is conscious of his own temporality through Manzei’s poem, Chōmei recites the poem itself. The progression reads as one that moves from an

23 *Hosshinshū*, p.276.
understanding of a Buddhist Truth (mujo), conceptualized through a poetic image, to its formal utterance via the recitation of the poem itself.

It is not without significance that this very poem by the Priest Manzei is said to have converted the famous Tendai priest, Genshin, to the belief that "the sacred teachings and Japanese poetry are in fact identical" (shogyo to waka to wa hayaku hitotsu narikeri). This anecdote about Genshin's change of heart also appears in the Hosshinshû, and it is clearly one that Chômei has in mind when he confers upon this poem a special place in his life as a recluse. Genshin, Chômei tells us, believed that waka constituted the sin of kigo, and thus refused to recite or compose poetry. However, one day around daybreak, when Genshin stood gazing over Lake Biwa, the sight of the boats going back and forth brought to his mind the poem by Manzei. At that moment he was forced to declare that Japanese poetry and religious practice were one and, abandoning his antagonism to poetry, he took to composing and reciting poems himself.25

Like many other priests and litterateurs, Genshin and Chômei share a common experience — the observation of a natural phenomenon and its translation into the medium of poetry. (This translation is seen by Chômei as being a 'natural' one, but it stems of course from a cultural tradition in which poetry played a central role — a tradition that both Chômei and Genshin were schooled in). For Genshin this experience overthrows his earlier assumptions about poetry. For Chômei on the other hand, it merely confirms and reinforces a position that he wishes to maintain — that poetry is central to the intuitive understanding of the Buddhist Dharma. Whether or not the readers of Chômei's Hôjôki had access to the Hosshinshû, Chômei's recreation of Genshin's experience in the context of his own life serves to sharpen a polemic which he is constantly engaged in, even when it is not explicitly stated, as in this passage —

namely, the compatibility between his involvement in poetry and his attempt to lead the life of an exemplary Buddhist.

Chōmei's close contact with his natural surroundings is what enables him to conceptualize the world in poetic terms. While the white waves of Okonoya evoke the memory of the poem by Manzei, the rustling of the leaves in the cassia trees takes him to China and reminds him of the estuary of Junyang, which the poet Po Ch'u'i speaks of in his famous poem, the Song of the Lute (Biwakō).\(^{26}\) The poem is a sad account of the faded glories of a talented lute player who lived in Chang'an and was highly sought after for her beauty and her artistic accomplishments. The poet Po Ch'u'i, who is in exile, encounters her in Junyang, where she now lives alone, as her husband, a trader "whose mind was only on profits and who thought little of separation", is away on business. Both Po Ch'u'i and the lute player share a sense of loss for the cultured life of the capital, in which refined music played a central part. The poem is a wistful and nostalgic evocation of a past which can never be recaptured.

In recollecting this poem by Po Ch'u'i, Chōmei perhaps shares in that sense of isolation from the aesthetic life of the court which he has left behind. Nonetheless, given the presence of this reference in the context of the poem by Manzei, Chōmei appears to cull from Po Ch'u'i's composition the theme of the uncertainty and ephemerality of human fortune, rather than of a sense of longing for a lost past. Interestingly, Chōmei does not recite Po Ch'ui's poem. This may have something to do with the fact that Po Ch'u'i's poem was not in Japanese. While it could be appreciated on the intellectual plane, it perhaps did not lend itself to a more emotive, oral rendering. Instead the poem leads Chōmei to another of his great passions — music.

Chōmei writes, "When of an evening, the wind rustles through the leaves of the cassia trees, I call to mind the estuary of Junyang, and, imitating the style of Gen

Tōtoku, I play the lute." Po Chu'i's poem evokes for Chōmei a set of dual associations which lead him to shift from poetry to music. Po Chu'i's poem is itself entitled "The Song of the Lute". Through the accomplished melodies played by the erstwhile successful belle now turned abandoned housewife, Po Chu'i and the woman herself both look back with longing at the refined world of music that they have been forced to leave behind. Thoughts of music and particularly the lute flow naturally from the theme of Po Chu'i's poem. Gen Tōtoku was the Chinese name of the famous poet and musician Minamoto no Tsunenobu. Tsunenobu was the grandfather of Chōmei's poetry teacher Shun'e. What established him in the artistic world was his mastery of the lute and his establishment of the Katsura style of music. Chōmei himself was the disciple of the musician Nakahara Ariyasu, who had mastered Tsunenobu's style of music and could thus trace his musical lineage to Tsunenobu through Ariyasu, Bichō no Ama and Mototsuna. The choice of the compositions of Minamoto Tsunenobu springs from the association of the Chinese ideogram 桂, the cassia tree in Po Chu'i's poem, with the style of music that Tsunenobu headed, the Katsura school, which was the Japanese rendering of the same Chinese character. Even while these associations are presented by Chōmei as coming to him 'naturally', it hardly needs to be stated that they are a reflection of Chōmei's skill as a writer who is well-schooled in the literary conventions of his times.

As we have mentioned earlier, in our discussion of the Hosshinshū, Chōmei claims that music, like poetry, is an important religious practice. It is no coincidence that it is Tsunenobu's teacher Daini no Sukemichi whom Chōmei singles out as the exceptionally talented biwa player who refused to have anything to do with customary Buddhist practices. Instead he would go into the Buddhist prayer hall and play melodies on the biwa. Getting someone to count the number of recitals, he would have them transferred to his accumulated merit for the attainment of rebirth in the Pure Land.27

(The normal practice was to recite the Amida Buddha’s name). Thus when Chômei speaks of emulating the *okonai* of Tsunenobu in the *Hôjôki*, it is reasonable to assume that he means not only following Tsunenobu’s musical style (one of the meanings of the word *okonai*) but equally treating music as a religious practice (*okonai* as used in the Buddhist sense of the term).

Chômei then proceeds to describe how when he feels inclined to play more music he performs the "autumn wind melody", to the accompaniment of the sound of the autumn breeze rustling through the pines, or plays the *ryûsen*, another melody, to the sound of the flowing water. The autumn breeze melody was a piece of *gagaku* music which originated in China in the T’ang period. In Japan it also came to be identified with the music that welcomed the dead to Amida’s Western Paradise. What is interesting here is the interdependence for Chômei not only of poetry and nature, but of music and nature as well. Just as scenes from nature could be translated verbally into poetic images, music too was seen as echoing the sounds that emanated from the physical surroundings. Establishing this integral link between music and nature rendered the former as the ‘voice’ that captured the Buddhist Truth encapsulated in the latter.

Chômei’s performance of the secret melody the *ryûsen* in the altered context of his life as a recluse acquires additional significance. According to the musical treatise, the *Bunkidan*, it was Chômei’s performance of another secret melody (the *takuboku*) while still at court which led to his disgrace and to his decision to take the tonsure.\(^{28}\) We have discussed this account at length earlier, but several aspects of this episode are worth restating for what they tell us about Chômei’s decision to play the *ryûsen* while living away from society in his ten-foot square hut. According to the *Bunkidan*, Chômei had received instruction only in the secret melody called the *yoshinsō* from his teacher Nakahara Ariyasu by the time the latter died. Chômei’s passionate involvement with

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\(^{28}\) *Bunkidan*, pp.5-8.
music led him to invite several well-known musicians to the Kamo shrine, and it was here that the incident which came to be called "playing the secret melody" (hikkyoku zukushi) took place. During the course of the recital, Chōmei found himself so carried away that he played the takuboku on his lute. The takuboku had not been taught to him by his teacher, and hence he was unauthorized to play it. Fujiwara Tadamichi, who at that time served as the person in charge of the Department of Music at the court (gakushō azukari), found out about this serious breach of musical tradition and complained to the Emperor Go-Toba, pointing out that for five generations countless numbers of people had devoted themselves to the art of music but not one had presumed to perform the takuboku in front of a large gathering. Tadamichi demanded that Chōmei be punished for his singular disregard for the hallowed traditions of the Way of Music.

Chōmei's defence of his actions as narrated in the Bunkidan is illuminating. He admitted to having played the takuboku, but claimed that his extreme commitment to the Way of Poetry led him to commit this grave error. Go Toba-in was inclined to believe that what Chōmei had done did not constitute a serious crime. However Tadamichi demanded that Chōmei be punished, on the grounds that any violation of the Way would set a precedent for further malpractices in the future. The Bunkidan concludes that this was what forced Chōmei to leave the capital and decide to follow the Way of Religion.

Whether or not this incident actually took place, it is interesting that such a story about Chōmei found its way into the musical lore of the thirteenth century. Chōmei's performance of the ryūsen (a secret melody which ranked higher than the yoshinsō) while in Hino has resonances of the incident reported in the Bunkidan. However, in this instance Chomei can follow the dictates of his own heart, unfettered by the norms and conventions that define artistic practices. As Chōmei himself puts it, "I play alone, I sing alone only to comfort my own heart."

It is only by isolating himself from society that Chōmei is able to pursue his highly individualistic path to enlightenment, one based on the claim not only that artistic and
religious practices can co-exist in harmony, but that the two are in fact identical. In leading such a life, Chōmei attempts to realize the possibility of living out an ideal that he elaborates most explicitly in the *Hosshinshū*, namely that of the *sukimono*.

Although Chōmei makes no mention of the ideal of *suki* in describing his life and activities as a recluse, in the *Hōjōki*, he presents himself in a way that closely approximates the ideal *sukimono*. He finds no pleasure in mingling in society, and lives alone in seclusion; he glorifies the simplicity of his dwelling and the self-sufficiency that his "straitened circumstances" allow him; he lives in close contact with nature, and through music and poetry articulates the truth that nature of its own accord reveals to him, namely, the transient nature of the world. It is only the final stage in the attainment of the ideal of *suki* - the dissolution of all attachment — that Chomei, towards the end of the work, admits to having failed to achieve. He thus implicitly acknowledges his failure to be the ideal *sukimono*. We shall discuss this later in the chapter.

It is important, at this stage, to point out that when Chōmei speaks of his activities on Mount Toyama, he clearly sees in the conjunction of nature, music and poetry the ideal ground for the cultivation of *suki*, which for him paves the way for the attainment of enlightenment. This can be seen in his descriptions of his physical surroundings and his own response to them. He writes:

> In spring, I see waves of wistaria and they seem to me like purple clouds shining brightly in the western sky. In summer, I listen to the song of the cuckoo, promising to guide me one day across the mountain road of death. In autumn, the voice of the cicadas fill my ears and it sounds like a cry of lament over the ephemeral empty shell which is this world. In winter, I am moved by the sight of the snow, piling up and melting away. Is this not like the sins and hindrances that obstruct our attainment of enlightenment?\(^\text{30}\)

\(^{29}\) *Hosshinshū*, p.278.

\(^{30}\) *Hōjōki*, pp.31-2.
In this passage Chōmei does not simply speak about the beauty of the wistaria blossoms or of the melodious singing of the cuckoo, and of the pleasure that his natural surroundings bring him. Here natural and religious symbols are presented as being integrally linked with one another, and thus, by extension, nature is seen as symbolizing various aspects of the Buddhist Truth. The beauty of the wistaria blossoms is heightened for Chōmei because they resemble the purple clouds on which the Amida Buddha is said to appear when he descends on earth to welcome human beings to the Pure Land. Similarly, in the cicada’s cry Chōmei hears the lamentation of all human beings over the essential frailty of worldly existence. Likewise, the sight of the snow falling on the ground and melting away is an occasion for Chōmei to reflect on the sins arising out of delusion that obstruct the entry of human beings into the Pure Land.

In describing the pleasures that the various seasons bring him in his new environment, Chōmei draws on a passage in the Chiteiki in which Yasutane writes:

In particular, in spring I have the willows on the eastern bank, misty and lithe; in summer, the bamboo by the northern gate through which the clear breeze rustles; in autumn there is the moon in the western window, bright enough to read a book by; and in the winter the sun shines through the southern eaves, just right for warming my back.31

Yasutane’s relaxed and almost feline enjoyment of his physical surroundings stands in contrast to Chōmei’s conscious effort to draw parallels between natural and Buddhist imagery. It needs to be stressed, however, that Chōmei was not alone in seeing the natural world through the prism of a Buddhist philosophical outlook. The association of natural images with Buddhist principles had become an important part of poetic practice in Chōmei’s time. Chōmei’s close identification with Japanese poetic traditions shapes the very nature and form of his response to the physical world around him. The parallel between the wistaria and the purple clouds of the Pure Land, for

31 Chiteiki, p.423; “Record of the Pond Pavilion”, pp.61-2.
instance, suggests itself to Chōmei because of its acceptable position in the *waka* tradition. Similarly, the notion that the cuckoo’s song signified a promise to guide human beings to the world of the dead was part of popular lore, and was the theme of one of Saigyō’s poems in his famous collection of poems, the *Sankashū*.32 Chōmei’s allusion to Saigyō’s poem is a striking instance of the way in which Chōmei’s interpretation of the scenes around him are moulded by poetry, whose hallowed traditions provide the necessary context for his articulations.

Again, the analogy that Chōmei draws between the piling up of the snow and human sin is one that had already been given a place in the Japanese poetic tradition. In the *Shūishū* for instance, Tsurayuki writes:

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32 *Zokukokkataikan*, no.7743, p.111. Saigyō’s poem reads:

\begin{verbatim}
Kono yo ni te
Katarai okamu
Hototogisu
Shide no yama michi no
Shirube to mo nare
\end{verbatim}

While still in this world,
Promise me
Oh cuckoo,
That you will be my guide
On the mountain road of death.
This deep immersion in the aesthetic traditions that dominate Japanese poetry lies at the heart of Chōmei's perception and the manner of his articulation of natural beauty. In another richly allusive prose passage in the Hōjōki Chōmei describes the solitude of the evenings spent on Mount Toyama, and the wistful beauty of his surroundings. Whether or not the scenery that he describes was actually visible from his home is a question that is rendered irrelevant if one recognizes that this section is a piece of rhetoric in which Chōmei consciously plays with images that are prescribed by poetic conventions, and enriches them by making them resonate with well-known poems from the past. Here even the concern to give these images a Buddhist underpinning, which dominates some of the other sections of the Hōjōki, is sometimes put aside for the sheer pleasure of verbal play that Chōmei the aesthete seems to delight in. He writes:

When on a calm night the moon shines at my window, I remember my friends of old with longing, or wet my sleeves at the cry of the monkeys. The fire-flies glowing in the grass thickets appear to me like the fishing lights off the island of Maki; the rain at dawn sounds like autumn storms blowing through the leaves. And when I hear the pheasants' cries, I wonder if they are not my father or mother[from a previous life]; when the wild mountain deer approach me without fear, I realize how far away I am from the world. Or again, when I awaken from my sleep, I stir up the buried embers of the fire, and make them the companions of my old age. As this is not an intimidating mountain, I am moved even by the hooting of the owls, and I never tire of the mountain scenery as it changes from season to season. For those who contemplate on things more deeply...

34 Kokkataikan, no. 258, p.59.
and comprehend them more profoundly, how much more this scenery would have to offer!  

Throughout this passage Chōmei evokes the poets of the past, and through his allusions pays homage to their writings. For instance, the first line of the above passage alludes to a poem by Po Chu'i in which the latter writes:

As I see the colour of the moon rising in the eastern sky of an evening on the fifteenth day of the month, I am filled with memories of my friends of old who live three thousand leagues away from me.  

Like many other poems by Po Chu'i, this verse had been popularized in Japan through its inclusion in the _Wakanrōeshū_, and Chōmei's contemporaries reading the _Hōjōki_ would have instantly identified his allusion to the Chinese poet who had captured the imagination of Japanese litterateurs from the Heian period onwards.

In speaking of the cries of the pheasants, Chōmei harks back to the following poem by Gyōgi:

_Yama dori no_  
_Horo horo to naku_  
_Koe kikeba_  
_Chichi ka to zo omou_  
_Haha ka to zo omou_

When I hear  
The pheasants cry  
Horo horo  
I wonder- is it my father?  
Is it my mother?  

Similarly, in order to express his sense of isolation from the rest of the world, he renders in prose the following poem by Saigyō:

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35 _Hōjōki_, p.34.  
36 _Wakanrōeishū_, pp 95-6.  
37 _Kokkataikan_, no. 2614, p.418.
Yama fukami
Naruru kasegi no
Kejikasa ni
Yo no tōzakaru
Hodo zo shiraruru

The wild deer
Who approach me without fear
In the depths of the mountain
Bring home to me
How far I am from the world.38

It is not only in order to echo the poems of famous poets that Chōmei uses his allusive techniques. He occasionally builds on a famous poem in order to speak of his own experience, which is at variance with that of the poem he harks back to. Thus when Chōmei wishes to convince his reader that his solitary existence in the mountains brings him solace, and that nature serves as a companion that he never tires of, he does so by inverting the harshness of the relationship between man and nature that Saigyō expresses in the poem:

Yama fukami
Kechikaki tori no
Oto wa sede
Mono osoroshiki
Fukurō no koe

In the mountain depths
I do not hear the songs
Of familiar birds.
The eerie cries
Of the owl alone reach my ear.39

Chōmei claims that the mountain that he lives on is one whose aspect is not terrifying, and thus the hooting of the owl has a rather different effect on him. He finds it strangely moving, and it serves to heighten his sense of oneness with the natural world. This retreat into a life of seclusion in which nature, poetry and music played a central role, was specially favoured by the religious recluses (intonshajonseisha) of Japan. It is no coincidence that in describing the pleasures of such a life Chōmei has as his models men like Gyōgi and Saigyō, who were the most respected of Japan's religious peregrinators. Both Saigyō and Chōmei were representative of a small group of the aristocracy who sought to escape the constraints of the court as well as of

38 Zokukokkataikan, no.8202, pl20.
39 Ibid, no.8198, p120.
institutionalized Buddhism, and who believed that the Buddhist doctrine could be intuited through a heightened sensitivity to the natural world in which they lived, and through the serious cultivation of poetry. They aspired to follow the path to enlightenment by becoming ideal sukimono.

In the passage quoted above, after talking about the sights and sounds that he sees and hears, Chômei concludes with the following statement: "For those who contemplate things more deeply and comprehend them more profoundly, how much more this scenery would have to offer". Here Chômei affirms his belief that nature encapsulates profound truths which can be comprehended only through deep contemplation. However this contemplation and comprehension of the Dharma is possible only through a dedicated commitment to the Way of Poetry. The Way of Poetry and the Way of the Buddha can thus be seen as inseparable, and through the mediation of nature, their identity can be better grasped. Given the context in which this statement appears, Chômei seems to suggest that for those who follow the Way of Poetry, scenery, i.e. nature, would hold out even more profound religious insights than those he has been able to grasp.

However, despite Chômei's celebration of the world of nature as against the world of men, he never entirely leaves behind the courtly society of his past. This may be the reason why he needs to constantly reiterate that the life that he has chosen to live is more 'natural' and thereby purer than life at the capital. The rustic simplicity of his life-style becomes an emblem of his detachment from the ostentation that marks life at court. The only human contact that Chômei maintains is with a ten-year-old boy who is the son of the guardian of the mountain. They engage in simple activities such as wandering through the mountains, picking rush flowers or gathering cranberries, filling their baskets with wild potatoes or collecting parsley. They seek out scenic spots which they can enjoy to their heart's content because, as Chômei puts it, "fine scenery is not private
property". Chōmei seems to suggest that his return to an innocent child-like state, achieved through his close contact with nature, enables him to enjoy the company of a ten year old.

Similarly, Chōmei argues that only the simplest and most makeshift of huts can provide a life that is without fear and which is free of material attachments. He makes this claim on the basis that it is a more natural way to live than the contrived ostentation of those who possess splendid mansions. To reinforce the naturalness of his choice of a ten-foot square hut, he draws a parallel between himself and other creatures who instinctively know where and how to live. He writes:

Only a temporary lodging provides a peaceful life and one without any danger. The hermit crab likes to take shelter in a small shell. This is because it knows that in times of danger it can escape quickly. The osprey lives on deserted shores because it fears human beings. I am like them. Knowing the dangers of living in the capital and being aware of the ephemerality of worldly life, I aspire to nothing, I seek nothing. I long only for tranquility and my sole pleasure is in the absence of grief...Ever since I fled the world and became a priest I have known neither resentment or fear. I leave my span of days for heaven to determine, neither clinging to life nor begrudging its end. My body is like a drifting cloud — I seek nothing, I lack nothing...If I have any desire in this life, it is merely to see the beauties of the changing seasons.41

Chōmei envisions the possibility of escaping from the sin of worldly attachment, of gaining a state of mind conducive to enlightenment through close contact with nature and through the cultivation of music and poetry. As we have pointed out earlier, it is the ideal of the sukimono which he elaborates in the Hosshinshū (but which is never mentioned in the Hōjōki) that is central to Chōmei's vision of enlightenment. Bearing

40 Hōjōki, p.33.
41 Ibid, p.37.
Debates on the Significance of the Final Passage of the *Hōjōki*

In the last section of the *Hōjōki* Chōmei returns to the question of attachment, and reviews his claim that his own life in his ten-foot square hut has somehow freed him from worldly concerns. The hut reemerges as a metaphor for attachment, and Chōmei acknowledges that he cannot dispense with the problem of attachment merely by invoking the size of his dwelling. He dismisses his own involvement with music and poetry as "useless pleasures" that he has wasted precious time recounting. The interpretation of this section is a central concern for scholars working on the *Hōjōki*, and it is to this passage that we now turn in order to make some sense of the dilemma that underlies much of Chōmei's writing, namely, how to achieve a harmony between Buddhist ideals on the one hand, and artistic activities that are in the last analysis rooted in the world of the mundane on the other. Chōmei's long statement at the end of the *Hōjōki* is as follows:

> Now the moon of my life starts towards the west and approaches the edge of the mountain. Soon it will head towards the darkness of the Three Ways. Why then do I attempt to justify my activities? The Buddhas taught that we should not allow ourselves to become attached to anything. Now my love for my hut and my attachment to the solitude of my surroundings are surely a hindrance to my salvation. Why have I wasted the little time that I have in this world in relating these useless pleasures? One calm morning, I continued to think about the reasons for this and asked of my own heart the question: The object of leaving the world and living in seclusion in the mountains is in order to control the mind and to follow the Buddhist Way. But though your outward appearance is that of a holy man, your heart is steeped in impurities. Your dwelling is an imitation of that of Vimalakirti, but in observance you fall behind even Cudapanthaka. Is this an affliction that stems from the bad karma that you have accumulated through previous existences, or is it that you have been rendered insane by the impurities of your
deluded mind? To this my heart has no reply. It employs my tongue
to utter two or three times the name of the Amida Buddha who, even
in the absence of their prayers, saves human beings and leads them
to the Pure Land.42

The positions that Japanese scholars have adopted with regard to this passage have
been guided for the most part by their particular ideological preconceptions. On the one
side there are the Buddhist scholars who have expressed disappointment at Chômei's
inability to attain to the Buddhist ideal of enlightenment, a failure they see reflected in his
tortured self-interrogation at the end of the work. There is another group of Buddhist
scholars who argue that Chômei was in fact an enlightened recluse who merely used his
narrative as an expedient means to point to the transcendence of the Buddhist Way. On
the other camp are the kokugakusha who see Chômei's involvement with artistic pursuits
as his predominant concern, and suggest that whatever Chomei's religious aspirations,
he was first and foremost a litterateur steeped in the aesthetic traditions of the court.

Perhaps the most important of the Buddhist scholars is Professor Yamada Shozen.
In his article, "The two Chômeis", he has argued that in the Hôjôki the central tension is
between one Chômei who possesses an enlightened mind and another Chômei whose
mind is still steeped in deluded thoughts. The enlightened mind criticizes the other
Chômei, who is absorbed with his natural surroundings and has a highly aestheticized
response to his life of solitude. The deluded mind, when faced with this criticism, is
unable to offer a satisfactory defence of its own position. Yamada points out that earlier
in the Hôjôki, Chômei constantly draws a distinction between the body (mi) and the
mind (kokoro). The contradiction between the two is resolved for him by leaving the
capital and leading a life of simplicity in which the mind, that is to say, the spiritual
aspect of his life, leads and directs the workings of the body which is driven by worldly
desires. It is in Hino that his body and mind for the first time achieve a harmonious co-
existence.

However, towards the end of the *Hōjōki*, a new dichotomy emerges within the mind itself. His enlightened mind accuses his deluded mind of having colluded with his body and sought comfort in "worthless pleasures", and of enjoying solitude in and for itself rather than as an environment conducive to the attainment of enlightenment. Yamada sees Chōmei's recitation of the nembutsu two or three times as a reflection of this struggle between these two selves. He argues that the enlightened self is given a superior position by Chōmei, but the deluded self does not abandon its recalcitrant position entirely. If it had done so it would have recited the Amida's name ten times, as is prescribed in the teachings of Hōnen. Instead it merely recites the nembutsu two or three times. This, for Yamada, points to a conflict between the two Chōmeis that is never successfully resolved, because of Chōmei's resistance to the doctrine of *tariki*, which urges relying on the Amida Buddha who grants salvation even without any effort on the part of its recipients.43

The phrase *fushō amida butsu* in this section of the *Hōjōki* has generated considerable hermeneutical disputes, and is one that Yamada deals with at length in another article.44 By pointing to an impressive array of sutras and other religious texts Yamada seeks to establish that the term *fushō* was a common epithet for the Amida Buddha, and signified his pledge to save human beings even without their praying for it themselves. The implication is that even with Amida's helping hand extended towards him without his asking, Chomei is unable to surrender to it completely.

For Yamada, the placement of the *Hōjōki* in relation to the *Hosshinshū* is integral to an understanding of Chōmei's position. He argues that the *Hōjōki* has to be seen as a work that comes before the *Hosshinshū*. This is because in the preface to the latter

work, Chōmei deals effectively with the contradiction between the deluded mind and the enlightened mind that troubled him towards the end of the Hōjōki. It is for this reason that Chōmei begins the Hosshinshū with the premise that the mind needs to be tutored and guided, and must not be allowed to follow its own inclinations. The preface follows from the insight that Chōmei has gained from the self-introspection that led him to write the Hōjōki.

Yamada concludes that even in the Hosshinshū Chōmei is unable to transcend the duality of the two selves that he recognizes within himself. This, he suggests, is because Chōmei fails to cast aside his own ego, which Yamada calls "his third self". It is this unconscious ego that is present in all of Chōmei's endeavours. For Yamada the conclusive proof of the presence of this ego is the fact that Chōmei never forsakes his literary activities, which by their very nature stem from the "I".

Yamada's main scholarly adversary is Professor Kishi Shōzo. Being a scholar in the kokugaku tradition, it is through a study of literary texts written in both Japanese and kanbun that he suggests an interpretation of the phrase fushō which is widely divergent from the one offered by Yamada. He puts forward the view that the Japanese reading of the characters fushō, is ukezu (unable to accept), and thus that in the context in which Chōmei uses the term it signifies his grudging recitation of the nembutsu even when he does not feel inclined to do so. For Kishi it is the tension between the Chōmei who is committed to the ideal of suki and the Chōmei aspiring to the Buddhist Path that is reflected in the final passage of the Hōjōki. He argues that although the Hosshinshū is often seen as more directly motivated by a religious commitment and therefore as being written after the Hōjōki, this does not explain the presence of the idealized sukimonono who are central to a number of stories in the Hosshinshū. Kishi sees the stories about sukimonono in the Hosshinshū as the source of inspiration for the life that Chōmei attempts to lead on Mount Toyama. The Hōjōki, according to Kishi, represents
the culmination of Chōmei's aspiration to the ideal of suki, and for all the self-criticism of the last section, it is a position that Chōmei is reluctant to give up.45

Imanari Genshō, whom we mentioned earlier in this chapter, takes an approach that differs from that of both Yamada and Kishi. He argues that the Hōjōki is a cleverly constructed work in which Chōmei intentionally plays on the structural affinities between the Hōjōki and the Vimalakirti sutra in order to produce a profoundly Buddhist work. Chōmei's elaborate descriptions of the pleasures of a solitary life in the midst of nature are, according to Imanari, an expedient means (upaya) used by Chōmei to illustrate the profundity of the doctrine of non-duality.

In support of his argument Imanari points to the close parallel between the structure of a story in the Hosshinshū and that of the Hōjōki, in which Chōmei again uses the concept of upaya to teach the Ultimate Truth. In the Hosshinshū, Chōmei narrates a story about a destitute man who has no fixed abode and who is forced to take shelter in broken down temples.46 He spends his days begging for paper and writing implements with which he draws sketches of houses, thus constructing different kinds of dwellings on paper. This activity is a source of great comfort to him. Chōmei praises him, saying that compared with people who spend their lives building homes only to see them destroyed, his position is much better, because at least it prevents him from experiencing grief and disappointment. Also, compared with the worldliness of those who are preoccupied with possessing luxurious homes, his architectural obsessions, being in the realm of the imaginary, are much more laudable. However in the conclusion to the story he points out that instead of wasting one's last days in pointless expectations it is much more meaningful to turn one's thoughts to the Buddha, and to aspire instead to the splendid mansions of the Pure Land. In the end the houses sketched by the poor

46 Hosshinshū , pp.236-9.
man, unworldly though they may be, are nothing but attachments, ephemeral aspirations without any substance.

According to Imanari, when Chōmei describes his own pleasure in living in a small hut, having rejected the luxurious life at court, he is deliberately enacting the role of the poor man who is fond of sketching buildings. At one level, the simplicity of Chōmei's little pastimes is more commendable than the the concerns of those who live within society. Yet for all that, Chōmei's love for his ten-foot square hut is nothing but a form of deluded attachment. Chōmei's final solution, says Imanari, is reliance on the Amida Buddha, and a recognition of the truth of non-duality which is encapsulated in Vimalākirti's final response in the Vimalākirti Sutra when he resorts to total silence.47

Unlike Imanari, both Yamada and Kishi, despite their differences, see the last passage of the Hōjōki as a reflection of a certain conflict within Chōmei which he is in the end unable to resolve. For Kishi this tension arises out of Chōmei's involvement with artistic activities, his desire to be the ideal sukimonō while at the same time being committed to the Buddhist Path. Yamada, on the other hand, locates Chōmei's struggle not in the realm of artistic preoccupations but at a 'serious' Buddhist level. For Yamada, Chōmei's inability to achieve liberation from the ego, the self, ultimately prevents him from attaining the enlightened state to which he aspires. Both of them work on the premise that towards the end of the Hōjōki Chōmei arrives, unwittingly, to the realization that he has not adequately come to terms with his life as a recluse, and that he has failed to transcend the problem of attachment which had formed the impetus for his move to a life of seclusion. One problem with this position is that it takes Chōmei's own statements about his dilemma at face value. The text is seen as being transparent, one that does not need to be interrogated.

47 Imanari Gensho, "Ren-in Hōjōki no ron", pp 115-127
Imanari on the other hand sees the *Hōjōki* as a cleverly constructed text which seeks to prove the ultimate superiority of the doctrine of non-duality through a contrived posturing. Chōmei allows the reader to see him as being allured by the pleasures of his natural environment, his simple abode, his music and poetry, and then destroys this edifice of mock detachment by turning it on its head and revealing it to be as deeply steeped in attachment as life in the 'secular' world. In the end he indicates the transcendence of the doctrine of non-duality in the manner of Vimalakirti, by abandoning intellectual debate and resorting to silence.

The strength of Imanari's position is in recognizing that the *Hōjōki* is a carefully constructed work in which the last section is integrally related to the rest of the narrative. This is convincing, given that in writing this work Chōmei follows a well-established genre, the *ki*, and has Yasutane's *Chiteiki* in mind while composing his own work. Above all, as Imanari demonstrates, the architectonics of the *Hōjōki* closely parallel that of the Vimalakirti sutra. Imanari's conclusion, however, seems to dismiss the possibility that Chōmei's choice of a highly aestheticized life in which music and poetry play a major role could be genuine, seeing it instead as a kind of contrived polemic designed to illustrate the Buddhist truth.

Even if we are to accept a reading of the final section of the *Hōjōki* which suggests that Chōmei successfully resolves the tension between a life rooted in worldly preoccupations and a life aspiring for liberation from mundane attachments, this resolution strikes us as being achieved at the formal level alone. It is significant that the site where Chōmei locates this tension is in the realm of artistic activities, and is closely tied in with his ideal of *suki*. This explains why Chōmei's description of his own life on Mount Toyama is fundamentally concerned with his attempt to lead the life of the ideal *sukimono*, in the manner of the heroes that he eulogizes in the *Hosshinshū*. Imanari, by choosing to ignore both the presence of the stories about *sukimono* in the *Hosshinshū*, and the particular elements that constitute Chōmei's quest for solace and enlightenment in
the Hojoki, fails to question the significance of the place of aestheticism within the formalized conflict that he sees being enacted by Chômei in the Hojoki.

What then, we must ask, is the significance of the sections within the Hojoki where Chômei, through elaborate allusive techniques, relives a poetic tradition in which he was once actively involved, or where Chômei implicitly claims that poetry and music are the most 'natural' media through which the Buddhist Dharma can be understood? If the stories in the Hosshinshû about the ideal of suki are considered in the light of Chômei's description of his own life as a recluse, the other question that arises is, "What is Chômei trying to say in the Hojoki with his elaborate celebration of the artistic activities that he pursues"? Below I offer a few tentative suggestions regarding one possible way of exposing the opacity of this deceptively straightforward narrative.

Conclusion

Perhaps in this context we need to consider Chômei's choice of the first person narrative in writing the Hojoki, and the fact that this has resulted in this work being interpreted as a 'true' account of Chômei's life. The tradition of using the "I" form was of course a well-established one in Japanese literary works, particularly the nikki and other works of the Heian period that came later to be classified as zuihitsu. The style of writing called the ki was also based on the narration of a personal experience and, as we have pointed out earlier, was closely related to the problem of relating the self to his/her natural environment.

It is clear however that first person narratives like the Makura no Sôshi (The Pillow Book) by Sei Shônagon or the Sarashina Nikki were not diaries in the sense of being faithful recordings of day to day events that actually happened in the lives of the authors. Rather, these works attempted, through a mixture of fact and imaginative fictionalizing, to present a view of the world in which the dominant ideals and values of their times would be highlighted. The personalized "I" then served as a kind of point of
reference from which larger statements about the world in which the writers lived could be made.

Seen from this perspective, it is clear that realism in the narrow sense was never a concern for these writers. So too with Chōmei. It is perhaps unwise to read the Hōjōki too literally, as an account of Chōmei's personal life. His use of the first person serves a specific purpose; he uses himself and his life as a point of departure, as the specific setting where the tension between the mundane and the other-worldly, between artistic practices and the Buddha's Way, can be enacted.

With this in mind, let us turn again to the concluding section of the Hōjōki. Here Chōmei admits that he, personally, has failed to lead a life that is totally in harmony with the Buddha's Dharma. He has remained ensnared in the web of deluded attachments. Even when he outwardly emulates Vimalakirti, inwardly he has not reached the spiritual level of even Cudapanthaka, the most stupid of the Buddha's disciples. In what sense does he continue to remain attached to worldly things? It is his love of poetry and music and his physical surroundings to which he himself draws our attention. However if we are to see his statements as reflective of his belief that the practice of music and poetry by their very nature are rooted in the mundane and are therefore deluded, then we are left asking ourselves why he spends an important part of the Hōjōki in indicating the seriousness of his commitment to these artistic practices. On the other hand, if we are to link this account of his pursuit of the arts and the particular context in which they are cultivated with the ideal of suki, which he elaborates in the Hosshinshū, we can perhaps better explain the presence of these passages in the Hōjōki. For Chōmei, it is the ideal sukimono who is able to attain a true understanding of non-duality, by assuming from the outset the identity of artistic and religious practices. The Way of Poetry and the Way of the Buddha are not to be viewed as dichotomies. They are one. It is with this ideal in mind that Chōmei consciously pursues the practice of music and poetry.
What Chomei appears to concede in the conclusion to the *Hōjōki* is his own failure to internalize fully his conviction that poetry and music are in no way distinct from the Buddhist Path. He is unable to do away with his discriminating mind (which for him is the deluded mind) even when he is aware at the intellectual level of the ultimate identity of artistic and Buddhist practices. By using the first person in the *Hōjōki*, Chōmei sacrifices the "I", himself, while maintaining that the ideal that he has upheld still holds good. When he describes the sights and sounds that he experiences in nature and articulates his own response through a series of allusions to poems by well-known poet/priests like Saigyō and Gyōgi, Chōmei hints at the possibilities that this opens up for those committed to the Buddhist Path by saying, "For those who contemplate on things more deeply and comprehend them more profoundly, how much more this scenery would have to offer"! As we have pointed out earlier, it is to the perfect *sukimono*, who spends his days in close contact with nature and who draws no distinction between artistic and religious practices, that enlightenment seems eminently attainable. Chōmei, by echoing Saigyō and Gyōgi, appears to suggest that the latter were religious recluses who had achieved the harmony between 'art' and 'religion' that lay at the heart of the ideal of *suki*. As for himself, he claims that he is unable to do the same. In the end, it is perhaps precisely in order to salvage the ideal of *suki* which he holds so dear that he sacrifices himself.
CONCLUSION

The central concern of this thesis has been to examine the struggle of one man, Kamo no Chōmei, to come to terms with his passionate involvement with the practices of poetry and music on the one hand, and his serious commitment to Buddhist ideals on the other. As we have seen, this was not so much Chōmei’s existential problem as a question that was central to the cultural and literary concerns of his times. Thus it was a concern and endeavour shared by many other litterateurs of this period.

What made Chōmei’s writings particularly significant, however, is that in all his works he continually engaged with this question, and was unwilling to accept easy solutions to it. For instance the formulation that literature constituted wild words and fancy phrases (kyōgen kigo), but that it could be harnessed to serve the Buddhist cause, was a particularly popular line of reasoning throughout the Heian and Kamakura periods. Writers such as Yoshishige Yasutane and Mujū Ichien found in this statement a convenient way of justifying the composition of particular kinds of literary writing as valid religious practices. Chōmei however, disregarded this proposition, presumably because he regarded it as simplistic — it is significant that the term kyōgen kigo does not appear anywhere in Chōmei’s writings, except when he reports the conversion of the Priest Genshin to poetry, who had earlier regarded it as nothing more than ‘fancy phrases’ (kigo).

Equally, Chōmei was not satisfied simply to evoke the Buddhist principle of nonduality (funi), and thereby deny the very existence of a real tension between ‘worldly’ and ‘religious’ pursuits. Court poets such as Shunzei were, by contrast, more comfortable with this notion, and this manner of resolving the problem enabled them to
devote themselves to the task of composing poetry. Chômei's struggle was in somehow making this abstract principle 'real' enough to allow him to immerse himself in poetry and music while at the same time adhering to the Buddhist goal of renunciation.

Rejecting easy solutions, it was instead by constantly reformulating and refining an old aesthetic ideal, *suki*, that he tried to follow through the implications of the doctrine of non-duality. It was by disassociating refinement, grace, sensitivity, skill at poetry and music — all essentially contemporary courtly ideals — from precisely their 'worldly' context and assigning them a central place in the pursuit of enlightenment, that he attempted to explain the essential oneness of the 'secular' and the 'religious'.

Chômei never arrived at a solution, least of all one that satisfied him. The interest in his works lies in his repeated and varying attempts to reconcile the conflicting claims of literary activity and religious practice, and in his clear recognition of the complexity of the problem and the difficulties entailed in any attempt to bring together these two elements.

The ubiquity of this problem in the writings of the Heian and Kamakura periods, the very fact that it by no means appears as a problem only in Chômei's works, suggests that any study of the literature and culture of that age would be seriously deficient if it did not pay attention to the complex interplay of artistic and Buddhist traditions, the tensions that this created and the manner in which they were resolved. Any work which did so would surely have to accord a position of importance to the writings of Kamo no Chômei, the poet and priest who struggled with this question with such extraordinary tenacity and intellectual seriousness.
During the reign of Emperor Murakami, there was a person who was called priest Imperial Secretary, Jakushin. Right from the beginning, when he was in the service of the court, his heart longed to follow the Buddhist Path, and in every situation that he found himself in, he displayed the deepest compassion and kindness towards others. Once when he was in the office of Imperial Records, he had to go to the court on official business. When he reached the camp of the Outer Palace guards, he saw a woman near the camp site who was weeping. When he asked her why she was crying, she replied, "I am in the employ of my master and he had asked me to carry a leather belt to someone who needed to borrow it. But I dropped it somewhere on the way and I know that I am going to be severely punished by my master. I feel so bad about having lost this precious object that I see no way in which I can go back to my master and I simply don't know what to do." Jakushin felt sorry for her and could empathize completely with her feelings. So he took off the sash that he was wearing himself and presented it to her. The woman said, "Although it is not the same as the original one, if I go back with this one instead of returning empty handed without any excuse, perhaps my offence will be forgiven", and rubbing her hands in a gesture of supplication, she went away happily.¹

¹ This incident appears in virtually the same form in the Ima Kagami. Cf. Ima Kagami zenshaku, pp 419-20.
As Jakushin had no other sash around he stayed away from public activities. Just at that time there was an urgent summons from the court, requiring his presence at a function. So he borrowed someone else's sash and went through with his official court duties.

When the Imperial Prince Nakatsukasa no Miya\(^2\) was learning Chinese poetry under Jakushin, the latter would pause at regular intervals between the lessons and, shutting his eyes, recite the Buddha's name.

At one time when Jakushin was presented with a horse by Prince Nakatsukasa, he went to court on horseback. En route, he got off his horse whenever he came upon even the smallest stupa, not to speak of large temples, offering prayers for the spiritual advancement of the dead and worshipping the Buddha. Whenever he saw some grass he stopped and let the horse roam about and graze freely. By this time the sun was already high up in the sky and the men accompanying him, who had left home in the morning, found that by the time they had got to their destination, it was more than two o'clock in the afternoon. Jakushin's retainer, who was with the horse, grew so unhappy with the situation that he began to beat the horse cruelly. At this point, Jakushin wept loudly and said, "Among the many animals that exist in this world, it is with this horse that you have come into such close contact. Is this not because a deep bond from former lives exists between the two of you? Perhaps this horse was your father or mother in another life. How tragic that you should commit such a grievous sin!" It is because Jakushin had such a heart that in his literary work the *Chiteiki* too he wrote, "Although my body is exposed to the sun [that is, works at the court], my heart dwells in the shade [that is, in seclusion]."\(^3\)

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2 Prince Tomohira was the seventh son of Emperor Murakami. He was in charge of the Ministry of Central Affairs (*Nakatsukasashō*) and was therefore referred to as Nakatsukasa no Miya.

3 *Chiteiki* in *Honchomomzai*, p 424.
When Jakushin was older, he shaved his head and went up to Mount Yokawa to study the scriptural writings. At this time, the holy man Soga⁴ was still at Yokawa. Wishing to instruct Jakushin, he began to read the opening lines of the *Makashikan*, "The cessation of all extraneous thoughts and meditation on the Dharma brings about a clarity and tranquility unheard of in the past."⁵ However Jakushin merely burst into tears and could not stop weeping. Soga clenched his fists, hit Jakushin and said,"What does somebody who knows so little about all this have to cry about? What a cute little devotee we have here!" Jakushin simply replied,"I am what I am and you are what you are" and left. After some time had passed he returned to Soga and, promising that things would be different this time, he begged to have the meaning of the religious text transmitted to him. Soga complied with his request, but no sooner had he read the first line of the *Makashikan* than Jakushin broke down again, as he had done earlier. This time too he was severely reprimanded by his master, and it all ended without him getting past even the first line.

After several days had elapsed he returned again, without any sign of feeling contrite, and after inquiring after his teacher's health, he requested him with great trepidation to instruct him again. But this time too he began weeping, even more copiously than he had done before, and seeing this Soga himself shed tears and, deeply moved, remarked,"Truly, you have a profound understanding of the Dharma." He then went on calmly to transmit the sacred teachings to Jakushin. In this way Jakushin attained unexcelled spiritual merit, and even the Imperial Regent Fujiwara Michinaga received instruction from him on the prescriptive teachings.

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⁴ The priest Soga took the tonsure and lived at the Enryakuji where he was a pupil of the famous poet/priest Jien. He died in 1003.

⁵ The *Makashikan* (*Mo ho Chih kuan*) was the work of the Chinese Tien Tai master Chih-i (538-597). See *Makashikan*, p 20.
When Jakushin passed away, Michinaga had the *fujōmon*\(^6\) written on his behalf and distributed one hundred thousand pieces of cloth made out of basswood. In the *shomon*\(^7\) that the priest of Mikawa\(^8\) composed in reply, it is said that he wrote a poem of unexcelled quality. It goes as follows: "In the past the Emperor Yōtei\(^9\) offered food to one thousand priests. The Tendai master Chigi [Chih-i] appeared as one of the priests, and so there was one portion too few. Now the Imperial Regent has offered one hundred thousand pieces of cloth for the salvation of Jakushin!"

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6 A composition written in literary style requesting various priests to recite the sutras on behalf of a person who had passed away and recording the alms distributed by the patron to ensure the well-being of the deceased in future lives.

7 A composition written in reply to the *fujōmon*, accepting the request.

8 Before becoming a priest he was known as Óe Sadamoto. He was the governor of Mikawa. In 986, following Jakushin, he took the tonsure. He went up to Mount Hiei and became a disciple of Genshin. He also undertook a journey to China and lived there for thirty-two years. He died in 1034.

9 The Emperor Yang ti of the Sui dynasty who reigned from 604 to 617. In 591 Yang ti who was at the time prince Yang Kuang, gave a lavish vegetarian feast for a thousand southern monks. After the banquet, the young prince knelt to receive from Chih-i the 'Bodhisattva vows' for lay Buddhists and the religious sobriquet of *tsung-ch’i h p’u-sa*, 'Bodhisattva of absolute control'. It is presumably to this incident that the priest of Mikawa refers in the *shomon*. 
3:1 THE STORY OF THE OLD MAN 'ALL THE MORE SO' OF ŌMI.

Not long ago there was an old man who lived as a beggar in the province of Ōmi. No matter if he was sitting or standing or what he saw or heard, he would only utter the words 'all the more so'. Thus it came about that the people of the province started calling him 'the old man all the more so.' Although he was not specially virtuous, as he had spent years wandering about always being amiable with everyone, he came to be well-known in the area, and anybody who saw him would take pity on him.

At this time, a holy man in the Province of Yamato dreamt that this old man would without question achieve rebirth in the Pure Land. Wishing to establish a karmic link with this person, the holy man went to Ōmi to look for him. He found that the old man lived in a little grass hut. The holy man spent the evening asking him what kind of religious practice he performed, but the old man said that there was absolutely nothing he did which was a religious observance. The holy man repeated his question, but without success. In the end he added, "Actually, I was told in my dream that you would attain rebirth in the Pure Land. It is for this reason that I have come here specially to see you. Please don’t hide anything from me." To this the old man replied, "There is in fact one practice that I follow and that is to constantly say 'all the more so', no matter what. When I am starving, I think of the sufferings of those who have fallen into the world of the hungry ghosts and I say to myself, "All the more so". Similarly when it is too cold or too hot, I think of the heat and cold in hell and I remind myself how much more severe that would be. Whenever I face any kind of painful situation, it makes me fear all the more the sufferings that exist in the lower realms. When I taste something

10 Among the various hells that have been conceptualized in Mahayana Buddhism, there is one hell with eight varying degrees of cold and eight kinds of heat. It is to this that the old man refers when he talks about the heat and cold found in hell.
delicious, I meditate on the nectar of the heavens and in this way put an end to all attachment to worldly delights. When I see an unusually beautiful colour, when I hear an incomparably melodious voice, even when I hear of fragrant incenses, I tell myself that all these add up to nothing. I realize that everything is infinitely more splendidous in the Pure Land, and this prevents me from being moved by the delights of this world."

The holy man shed tears when he heard what the old man had to say, and folding his palms in obeisance, he went away. Even if this old man most certainly did not meditate on the magnificence of the Pure Land, he always kept in mind the fundamental principles of the doctrine, no matter what the situation and this too amounted to a kind of religious practice leading to the Pure Land.
Not long ago there was a minor official called Kunisuke who was the son of Kunitaka, the lord of Kajima. Kunisuke fell in love with a lady-in-waiting who served at court. Just at the time when he was deeply involved with her his father was appointed Lord of Kajima and moved there, and Kunisuke had no choice but to leave with him for this distant province. He found the thought of being away from his lady for even one day unbearable. The prospect, then, of parting and going far away was more than he could endure; but there was nothing to be done. So reassuring her with all kinds of promises, he departed, weeping all the while.

Even after Kunisuke started living in Kajima his thoughts were always with the lady. Whenever a messenger arrived from the capital he would send her a letter, but they never reached her. There were obstacles of all kinds, and he never received a reply. While he spent the months and years forlornly, one day he chanced to hear someone say that many people in the capital were suffering from a serious illness and that things were in a state of turmoil there. His first thoughts were about the lady he loved, and his anxiety knew no bounds.

Finally one day he returned to the capital. He sent a messenger to the court to inquire after her, but he was told that having fallen ill she had already left court service and gone away. The messenger returned despondently and reported the news to his master. Kunisuke's heart was filled with sorrow and he felt as though he had lost his senses. He asked people whether they had any idea of her whereabouts, but no one was

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11 The acarya Gyōen was commonly known as Tōnobō. He lived at the Miidera temple and received the highest priestly rank hokkyō or Transmitter of the Dharma. His name before he took the tonsure was Minamoto Kunisuke. He was the eldest son of Minamoto Kunitaka. He died in 1047.
able to help him. There was nothing more to be done and so he got on his horse and set off aimlessly, his heart in a state of the deepest gloom.

He remembered vaguely that there was somebody whom his lady knew in the western section of the capital, and he decided to go there although he knew of no definite place where he could make his inquiries. As he wandered about, he saw the girl who used to work for his lady, standing in front of a tumble down cottage. Overcome with joy, he was about to go and talk to her, but she fled into the house as if to hide away from him. He got off his horse and went into the house. There he saw the lady he loved, sitting with her back towards him, combing her hair.

Thinking with surprise and relief that she was well after all, he embraced her from behind and told her passionately how much he had worried about her. But she said nothing in reply. All she did was to weep profusely. He was filled with pain and regret and attributed her behaviour to her feelings of resentment towards him. So, holding back his tears, he tried to comfort her in various ways. "Why do you continue to turn your back towards me? I wanted to see you as quickly as I could, but I am still stifled [with grief]." So saying, he pulled her towards him. But this made her weep all the more, and she refused to turn her face towards him. Exclaiming,"This is terrible. You really harbour a deep grudge against me, don't you?", he pulled her forcibly towards him. He saw then that both her eyes were missing. It was as if the branches of a tree had been broken off. The sight was unbearable to behold. He found himself quite lost and unable to utter a single word. But he got a grip on himself, and asked how this had all come about. His lady only continued to weep, saying nothing, and so the woman who was in her service explained what had happened, all the while trying to keep back her tears. She said,"After you went down to the provinces, for a long while she secretly waited for a letter or some word from you, but we did not hear from you at all. She spent two years languishing for you. Then she was gripped by an illness and left the palace. The people she was close to were caught up with their own affairs, and so she had nowhere to go and stay. This is
how I came to look after her in this place. Shortly after we moved here she appeared to breathe her last. I realized that there was no point any longer in keeping her in the house, and so I placed her body in the fields in front of the house. By the afternoon, however, I discovered, much to my surprise, that she was alive. Meanwhile the crows, as they are wont to do, had already done the deed and there was nothing further to be done. I wanted to make every effort to seek you out but, understandably, given the pathetic state she was in, she felt very strongly that the fact of her being alive was to be kept from you, and so I have kept her here in hiding and taken care of her.” When Kunisuke heard all this he was overcome with sorrow and pain. He asked himself what karma from his past life could have brought such a misfortune upon him, and realizing that he had only this life in which to set things right, he made his way directly to Mount Hiei there to become a disciple of Keiso, who lived at the Kanroji temple of the Assistant High Priest, Kyōjō. He later had the esoteric teachings transmitted to him. The person who came to be known as Tōnōbō Gyōin, the Transmitter of the Law, was in fact this man Kunisuke.

When he was on his way to Mount Hiei the first time, he did not know which path to follow and he did not have anyone who could guide him there. Pausing repeatedly and asking people the way, he reached a place called Mizunomi. There he met the High Priest Kakuun. The latter made the following remark about Kunisuke: “It is strange, but he looks like someone who is going up to Mount Hiei to take the tonsure. His eyes seem to reflect profound wisdom. I wonder where he is making his way to. Let us find out.” Then he sent one of his men to follow Kunisuke. The servant returned and recounted all

12 The monk Keiso had the esoteric teachings transmitted to him by the High Priest Yokei at the Enryakuji. After his teacher’s death, Keiso moved to Iwakura Daiunji and then later to Miidera. He died in 1019.

13 This should be Gyōen rather than Gyōin.

14 Kakuun was a high ranking priest who lived in the Dannain, located in the eastern complex of Mount Hiei. He was a master of the esoteric teachings. His sect came to be called the Danna sect and set itself up as the rival of Eshin’s group. He died in 1007.
that had befallen Kunisuke, and announced that the latter was going to the High Priest at
the Kanroji temple to become his disciple. At this Kakuun said,"It is just as I had
thought. What a shame that someone of such great wisdom should follow the line of
Chishō\(^15\) and not become a disciple of Jikaku!\(^16\)

When Kunisuke was learning the secret teachings from his master, the latter,
possibly in order to test his spiritual state said to him,"I have heard that before you gave
up worldly life you were a talented mime, and that you entertained people with your
comic performances. I would like to see you perform the Senshūbanzai.\(^17\) Tônōbo
complied with great composure, and taking some paper that served as wrapping for the
sutras, he put it on his head like a cap and proceeded to dance with great elegance.
When his master saw this he was moved to tears and praised him with the following
words: "I was convinced that you would refuse to dance, but I see that you are truly a
person who has experienced religious awakening. You are worthy of the greatest
esteem."

\(^15\) This was the title received by the priest Enchin. He was the fifth Tendai Chief Abbot. He died in
891. Later on his followers broke away from Enni's group and came down from the Enryakuji to
the Enjōji. There they formed the teramonha or the Temple sect. They claimed Enchin as the
founder of their sect. Kakuun's comment reflects the ongoing rivalry between the two sects.

\(^16\) Jikaku was the title received by the priest Enni. He was the third Tendai Chief Abbot at
Enryakuji. His followers were known as members of the yamamonha or Mountain gate sect. It is
in order to distinguish themselves from this group that the rival faction called itself the teramonha.

\(^17\) This was a dance performed by the lower classes, praying for prosperity or longevity.
Not long ago there was a man who worked day and night as the personal attendant of the Emperor. He became intimate with a lady of great refinement, and for several years he visited her and spent nights with her. However at some point, probably because he had transferred his attentions to someone else, he began to make excuses, saying that he had work at the court, and his visits to her became less and less frequent. The lady realized that, contrary to her expectations, the time between his visits had grown progressively longer and longer. Finally the man stopped visiting altogether, and the lady spent the months and years pining for him and grieving. One day this gentleman, when out on some business, happened to go past her gates.

The woman who worked for the lady saw the gentleman and told her mistress that she had seen him go past the house, and that he had looked as though he remembered that this was the place that he once used to visit, for he had peeped from his carriage for a view of the place. When the lady heard this, she replied, "There is something that I would like to say to him. Please request him to come in." The maid remarked that he had already gone past and that he was unlikely to return, but she ran after him and conveyed her lady's message to him. He was extremely surprised, and wondered what she wanted with him. But he felt he owed it to her to stop and at least hear what she had to say.

As he went in through the gates he saw that the weeds had grown thick and the garden had a rough and neglected look, such as it had never had before. The sight of

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18 As Chômei himself says that he does not know the name of the person whose story he relates, the title of the story is likely to have been a later accretion.
this filled him with an inexplicable feeling of sadness. He could not help but feel that it was all his fault, and a sense of unease came over him. The lady, however, showed no sign of pleasure at seeing him again. Looking for all the world as though she had been in that posture since the time he last saw her, she sat leaning on an elbow rest and continued to read the Lotus Sutra. She seemed to have suffered from his neglect, because she was a little thinner than before. However the sight of her hair hanging down in profusion and the extremely pure and fragile beauty of her form, made him wonder if she was the same person he had known before — such was the incomparable beauty of her appearance. He wondered what madness had induced him to stop loving her, and his feelings of regret at the way in which he had behaved towards her were deep and heartfelt. He then began to tell her earnestly the circumstances that had kept him away from her against his will.

The lady looked as though she might say something, but she did not utter a word in reply. He probably assumed that she would do so once she had finished reading the sutra. As he waited forlornly, his heart filled with incomprehension, she recited the following phrase two or three times, "If after the extinction of the Thus Come One, within the last five hundred years there is then a woman who, hearing this scriptural canon, practices it as it is preached, at the end of this life, she shall go straight away to the world-sphere Comfortable (Sukhavati) to the dwelling place of the Buddha Amitayus" 19; and then, while still on her knees, she breathed her last, looking as though she had merely fallen asleep.

I wonder how the man must have felt at that time. I have heard that he was called Controller something or the other, but I have forgotten his exact name and title.

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One hears of instances such as that of the lady who turned into a stone because of her love for a man, or of the one who, grieving excessively, became a malevolent spirit. Although, without a doubt, love is a deeply sinful practice, the fact that the lady in this story was able to make it the means for entering the Pure Land, and the fact that she ended her life in the way that she wanted, suggests that she was indeed possessed of truly wondrous intent.

If only people who have suffered because of a love affair were to emulate her and pray for rebirth in the Pure Land, what noble spirit they would display. Even if you happen to be with someone who feels the same way about you as you do about him/her, it is not as if you will be able to spend several lifetimes together. In vain the queen Yōki pledged eternal love. In vain the queen showed her faint form to the Emperor in the smoke that rose from the incense that he burnt to call back her dead spirit. It goes without saying that those who do not get involved in a love affair are not likely to know what sorrow means. When people are desperately in love they will refer to the peak of Mount Fuji, and liken their sleeves to those of the fisherfolk, and in this way express the depth of their feelings [through poetry]; but in the end it all amounts to nothing. It is truly worthless to spend our time alone causing ourselves pain and grief and wringing the tears from our sleeves. Our lives do not end in this world. There is always

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20 A popular legend in China about a lady who grieved her separation from her lover to such a degree that she turned into a stone. In Japan too the princess Matsurasayo, who saw her lover off as he departed on a boat, later on turned into a stone.

21 Yang Kuei fei, the famous consort of the Emperor Hsuan Tsung of the T'ang dynasty, who died during the An Lu-shan war in China. Chōmei refers here to a poem by Po Chu'i in which Yang Kuei fei, lamenting the loss of the Emperor, prays that they will be reunited in heaven like the pair of imaginary birds, each with one eye and one wing and always flying together.

22 Li fu ren was the concubine of the Emperor Han Wu-ti, who reigned from 140 to 87 B.C. There is a popular legend that the Emperor, lamenting the loss of Li fu ren, would burn incense and see her form in the smoke that rose up.

23 The fire and smoke that rose from Mount Fuji had become popular symbols in Japanese poetry, of the ardour and passion of one who was in love. So too the sleeves of the fisherfolk, which are always wet, came to signify the tears shed by the lover who suffers the pain and sorrow of unrequited love.
retribution in the next life for the deeds performed in this one. Thus even in the lives to come, those who have languished in love in this one will do so again. In this way in past, present and future lives, lovers will without end find themselves unable to gain liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. This constitutes a grave sin indeed. If only human beings could cut off all thoughts of love and be reborn in the Pure Land, all pain and anguish would appear as illusory as a dream seen at night in one's sleep. What would be truly desirable is for the person who has been reborn into the Pure Land to return to earth and be the spiritual guide who can lead his/her lover to the Pure Land. If one's grudge [born from a failed love affair] is so strong as to continue even after entering the Pure Land, unlikely though that is, all one would need to do is to talk about it with the Amida Buddha.
The Middle Counsellor Akimoto was the son of the Grand Counsellor Toshikata, and he worked for the cloistered Emperor Go Ichijō, who loved him dearly. Right from his youth Akimoto had no cause to be dissatisfied with his rank and status, and yet his heart did not take pleasure in matters pertaining to this world, and he yearned only to follow the Buddhist Path and to attain enlightenment. It was his habit to constantly recite the following poem by Po Chu'i: "I wonder to what age he/she belongs, the person who lies in this old grave! I do not know his/her name or sex. Undoubtedly, now turned to earth, the spring grasses grow there year after year." Akimoto was a formidable sukiyibi. Day and night he would play his biwa while intoning the following prayer: "Although I have committed no crime I wish I could take the burden of it on my shoulders. Banished far away, I long to gaze at the moon from my place of exile!"

When the cloistered Emperor Go Ichijō passed away, Akimoto lamented his loss in a manner quite out of the ordinary. After the Emperor’s death, the palace lost its earlier splendour, and in the end nobody even lit the lamps there. When Akimoto asked why things were in such a state he was told that all the officials were now involved in attending to the new Emperor, and that there was no one left to look after the deceased.

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24 Akimoto was the eldest son of Toshikata and belonged to the family of Daigo Genji. He rose to be middle counsellor and held the third rank (junior grade). He took the tonsure at the age of thirty-seven. He spent several years at Yokawa and Ōhara and died in the year 1047 at Daigo. The story of Akimoto appears to have captured the imagination of writers of the Kamakura period for it makes its way into many works such as the Zokuhonchōōjōden, the Eiga monogatari, the Ōkagami, the Fukurozōshi, the Jikkinshō, the Kokonchomonjū, the Konjaku monogatari and so on.

25 Akimoto came to be well-known for these lines; Yoshida Kenkō quotes them in his Tsurezuregusa, p 97.
Emperor's palace. Hearing this, Akimoto was struck forcibly by the transient nature of this world. Although all the other courtiers paid their calls on the new Emperor, Akimoto refused to appear before him, saying, "A faithful retainer does not serve two masters." He performed all the duties required of him during the period of mourning, and as soon as they were over, he left his home to take the tonsure. Members of the highest ranking nobility who had known him for years were saddened by his departure: they tried to stop him, pulling at his sleeves, but he showed no signs of hesitation whatsoever.

He went up to Yokawa where he shaved his head and lived in seclusion. At this time Lady Jōtōmonin 26[ mother of the Cloistered Emperor Go Ichijō] inquired after him. He replied with the following poem:

\[
\begin{align*}
Yo o sutete & \quad \text{Although I am one} \\
Yado o idenishi & \quad \text{Who has cast aside the world} \\
Mi ni naredomo & \quad \text{And left my home,} \\
Nao koishiki wa & \quad \text{My longing for the past} \\
Mukashi narikeri & \quad \text{Remains as ever, unchanging.}\ 27
\end{align*}
\]

Later Akimoto went to live at Ōhara, where he devoted himself single-mindedly to Buddhist practices. At this time the Imperial Regent\(^\text{28}\) [Fujiwara Yorimichi] heard of Akimoto's incomparable virtue and paid him a secret visit in his cell. Sitting together, the two of them spent the night talking to each other. Dawn came, and throughout the night not a single word relating to worldly matters had passed between them. The Regent was so filled with respect and awe for Akimoto that he repeatedly made a pledge that he would have Akimoto as his religious instructor. Just as he was about to leave,

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26 Fujiwara Shōshi was the daughter of Fujiwara Michinaga and was married to the Emperor Ichijō. She died in 1074.

27 This poem as well as Jōtōmon-in's reply appear in the Goshūshū, Kokkataikan nos. 1030 and 1031.

28 Fujiwara Yorimichi was the younger brother of Jōtōmon-in. Akimoto was his adoptive son. His visit to Ōhara to meet Akimoto is not mentioned elsewhere.
Akimoto said, "You have done me a great honour by visiting me. Toshizane\textsuperscript{29} leaves much to be desired."

At the time the Regent did not understand what Akimoto had meant when he uttered those words. After getting back home he pondered on the matter and then, deeply moved, he said to himself, "What he said in the end was unrelated to what had come earlier. No one would speak ill of his own child. Even if Toshizane is not a particularly talented person, Akimoto finds it impossible to neglect his child, and so perhaps he wants me to take him under my wings. Truly, even if one has turned one's back upon the world, how hard it is to cast aside the love one feels for one's child. No wonder then that Akimoto was so overwhelmed with concern for his son."

After this, whenever the occasion arose, the Regent singled out [Akimoto's adopted son] and bestowed special favours on him. It is because of this that Toshizane, despite being an orphan, rose very quickly to be a Grand Counsellor. The Grand Counsellor of Mino was in fact this very gentleman.

\textsuperscript{29} The name Toshikata appears at this point in the standard text used by the editor. As this is the name of Akimoto's father, it makes no sense in this context and so he has substituted Toshikata with the name Toshizane, following the \textit{kanbunbon} text of the \textit{Hosshinshū}. However there is no record of any son of Akimoto's named Toshizane. His younger brother did have a grand-child named Toshizane, according to the \textit{Sonpibunmyaku}, but he was not even born when Akimoto was still at court.
In recent times there lived an extremely destitute old man. Although he held a court rank, he lacked the proper connections that would have enabled him to present himself in high places. For all that, he was a man of old-fashioned tastes, for whom it would have been inconceivable to behave in a manner that was in any way outlandish. It was not as though he had no worldly attachments, and this made him disinclined to take the tonsure. He had no place in which to live, and so he would often take shelter in some broken-down temple building.

Thus he whiled away the months and years. The only activity he would engage in from morning to night would be to beg for waste paper, and, having gathered enough, he would draw up any number of architectural plans of houses and dream about the places he would build. "The bedroom will be like this. I wonder how the gates should be built..."; thus he would make plans and calculations and endlessly engage in his daydreams, which served to console his spirits and to pass the time. Those who saw him or heard about his activities said that his was indeed an example of obsessive behaviour.

While it is true that planning for things that can never materialize is an empty exercise, if one thinks about it carefully, it is still not nearly as bad as seeking solace from the pleasures of this world. There is many a palatial home that stretches over one or two hundred metres, and the world no doubt looks upon such a place with the deepest admiration. But in truth, the space we occupy sleeping or waking takes up no more than one room. For the rest, it is used by others — some with whom we are on intimate terms, others with whom we have no special relationship. Or again it is taken up by building shelters for cows and horses who would normally live in the hills and fields.
Is it not then entirely pointless to inflict so much hardship on the body and to torment the heart in this way, worrying about the kind of dwelling one would like to live in? And yet people spend their time choosing building material, and polishing the cypress bark [which is used for making the roof] and the tiles as if they were jewels and mirrors, imagining that they have hundreds and thousands of years in which to live. What possible use can all this be? The life of the owner is by nature an ephemeral thing, and so he cannot live in any dwelling for long. After his death it becomes someone else's home, or gets knocked over by the winds or rots away in the rain. Needless to say, if it catches fire, then all the work put in over the months and years to build it is reduced within moments to nothing but smoke.

By contrast, the house that this poor man built in his imagination did not involve running around finding the right location. Nor did he have to work at building or polishing it. His was a house that no wind or rain could destroy. There was no danger from fire either. It took up only one piece of paper, and yet it was big enough to shelter his heart.

The bodhisattva Nagarjuna said, "Even if a person is rich, the fact that he never stops wanting more makes him a poor man. If, on the other hand, a poor man does not seek for more, then he is a rich person." The holy man of the Shoshazan Engyōji temple wrote the following words: "I fold my arms and make them my pillow. It is in this that real prosperity lies. Why then would I pursue wealth and splendour which are as ephemeral as the floating clouds?" Or again, a certain person recounted the following incident: "In China there was a koto master who always had a koto without strings close at hand. He would make sure that it was by his side at all times. People

30 The source for this quotation is not known. Nagarjuna, who lived around the year 150 A.D, was born in a family of Brahmins in South India. He espoused Mahayana Buddhism and is well-known for his treatises on many Buddhist sutras.

31 The holy man Shōkū was a high-ranking Tendai priest. He built the Engyōji temple in Harima. He died in 1007.

32 This quote is probably an adaptation of a similar passage that appears in the Confucian Analects.
found this strange and asked him why he did this. His answer when questioned thus was, “Whenever I look at the koto its various melodies well up within my mind. It has the effect of consoling my spirits, and in this it is in no way different from actually playing on the instrument.”

Those who build houses are regarded with deep admiration by onlookers, but for those that actually build them there is always something that fails to satisfy their hearts. In this regard the house that the poor man built in his mind is in every way more advantageous. Still, we must bear in mind that even though his actions were laudable when measured against the worldly activities of men, after all, even the splendours of the heavens have their limitations. The dwelling inside the pot (attractive though it may be) is not what we should be aiming for ultimately. It goes without saying that instead of wasting our time pursuing vain aspirations, we should yearn for the many storied buildings and palaces of the Western Paradise, in which we can dwell forever so long as we truly desire to do so.

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33 There is a popular tale about the priest Hichōbō, who entered the pot that an old vendor of medicines was carrying. Inside it he found a splendid palace and, together with the old man, he enjoyed himself drinking sake.
6:3 The Story of the Personal Attendant of the Cloistered Emperor Horikawa, Who Out of Love for His Master, Threw Himself into the Sea.

During the reign of the cloistered Emperor Horikawa\(^{34}\) the country was well-governed, and the people gentle and tranquil. The reign of the cloistered Emperor Go Sanjō has been held up recently as being one that was exceptional, but Emperor Horikawa surpassed him in the deep consideration he showed others, in his refinement and his artistic sensitivity. Both high and low alike rejoiced at living in an age which they felt was comparable to the Tenpō\(^{35}\) period in China, and the Engi and Tenryaku eras in our own country.\(^{36}\)

At this time there was a man of low birth who served the Emperor day and night in his Private Office. Even to a person like him, so lacking in culture, the Emperor seemed incomparably wondrous. It did not cross his mind to try and improve his own standing in life; he felt no discontentment and simply rejoiced in the fact that he lived at a time when the Emperor Horikawa reigned, and in the fact that he could spend his days and nights inside the palace. Although he served the Emperor with all his heart, his position was of such insignificance that he had no opportunity to display the depth of his own feelings for his master.

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\(^{34}\) Horikawa was the second son of the cloistered Emperor Shirakawa. He was specially popular and missed because of his early death in 1107 at the age of twenty-nine.

\(^{35}\) This was the period between 742 and 756, the last part of the reign of the Emperor Hsuan Tsung of the T'ang period.

\(^{36}\) The Engi and Tenryaku eras were considered the ideal epochs of the Heian period. Engi was the name given to the period between 901 and 923 and it fell during the reign of Emperor Daigo. Tenryaku covered the period between 947 and 957, part of the reign of the Emperor Murakami.
However, the principle of ephemerality is one that no one, high or low, can escape from. Thus it was that when the Emperor passed away everyone felt as if a flower which had been in full bloom had faded away in the wind and the rain. Those who were even slightly accomplished in the arts all joined together and grieved his death in a manner quite beyond the ordinary. As for this servant, from the day of the Emperor's death, he lost all sense of being alive. He appeared unable to distinguish between day and night, and commuted back and forth from the palace in a daze. Finally he shaved his head and wandered about listening to religious sermons, but failed to utter a single word or engage in any activity. He was like the empty shell of a cicada — he no longer looked like a living being. He spent his time praying to the various Gods and Buddhas, asking them to show him the place where the Emperor had been reborn. After several years it was revealed to him in a dream that the Emperor had been reborn as a great dragon in the western seas. Overcome with joy, he set off instantly in the direction of Tsukushi, and on a day when the eastern winds were blowing fiercely, he boarded a boat and rowed away. For a while he could be seen floating on the waves, but in the end he disappeared. Those who saw it happening shed tears, and this event became the talk of the day. As all things depend on the power of the will, I am sure that this man was able to take on the appropriate form of life and serve the Emperor again.

In general, depending on one's status in life, many unexpected things happen in this world. Consider how the servant in this story, despite the fact that he was neither on intimate terms with the Emperor, nor received his affections, yet gave up his life to be with him. By contrast, those who had been closer to the Emperor proved to be much more unfeeling. There are many examples of this kind of thing, and I am sure that it has to do with the bonds from previous lives that link people. One day I wish I could come back to life after my death just in order to see how people have responded to me.

37 The Emperor Horikawa was renowned as a flute player. The sound of the dragon as it cries in the seas had come to be likened in Japanese tradition to the sound of the flute. This may explain why Horikawa comes to be associated here with the dragon.
When the priest Saigyō took the tonsure he left everything in the hands of his younger brother. As he was particularly attached to his little daughter, it was not surprising that he found it particularly hard to part with her. He wondered what he should do about her, and as there was no one to whom he could safely entrust her upbringing, he left her in the charge of his younger brother, imploring him to look after her with affection.

As he wandered about in different places performing religious practices, before he knew it two or three years passed by. Certain business happened to take him to the capital, and as he chanced to go past the place where his brother used to live, he suddenly remembered that his little daughter would now be about five years old, and he wondered anxiously how she was getting on. Saying nothing of his intentions, he merely looked inside through the gates of the house. He saw his daughter dressed in a shabby single robe, mixing freely with the servants' children and playing in the dirt by the side of the fence. Her luxurious hair hung down gracefully to her shoulders. Her form too was quite exquisite: she promised to be quite a beauty when she grew up. When it finally sunk in that it was his own daughter that he was looking at, his heart welled up with feeling. As he stood there gazing at her lamentable state, his daughter noticed him staring at her. Exclaiming, "Let's go. There is a scary priest out there" to her friends, she ran inside. Although he told himself not to think about it, he could not help but worry about her. The days went by. Perhaps news of the situation got around,

38 This story, which is not recorded elsewhere, is a very useful document about Saigyō's life. As Chōmei was a contemporary of Saigyō, (he was thirty six years old at the time of Saigyō's death), much of what Chōmei writes has been used for reconstructing some aspects in the life of Saigyō.
for the Lady Reisen, the daughter of the minbukyō of the Kujō family\(^{39}\), who was connected with Saigyō's wife, offered with the greatest sincerity to adopt the girl and look after her with the deepest affection. The mother of the girl\(^{40}\) decided that it would be a good arrangement for her daughter, given that the family who was taking her in was of reasonable standing. So she hastened to hand over her child to them.

Indeed the girl came to be looked after with the greatest care, and as everything had gone according to Saigyō's wishes, he spent the years relieved of any anxiety on her account. When the girl was about fifteen or sixteen years old, the younger stepsister (born of the principal wife) of Lady Reisen\(^{41}\) got married to Fujiwara Ieakira, who held Third Rank in Harima. As the couple were looking for ladies-in-waiting to work for them, and as Lady Reisen's own daughter was in service there, Lady Reisen felt that it would be a good idea to send her adopted daughter to the same place, where she could keep in touch with her. She felt that arranging for her to work there would not be a problem, as the girl came from a reasonably good family. Taking all this into consideration, Lady Reisen sent the girl to Harima to serve as a lady-in-waiting.

News of this reached Saigyō's ears, and it was obviously not what he had had in mind for his daughter, for he went to a small cottage next to the house where she lived and sent her a message saying that she was to come and see him in secret. The daughter found all this rather intriguing, but when she heard that it was a priest who wanted to talk to her she thought to herself, "I have heard that my father has become a monk. Who other than he would call me out in this way? In recent times I had reconciled myself to the painful thought that I would never see my father again. If it is indeed my father..."

\(^{39}\) This refers to Fujiwara Akiyori who was of the third rank and held the post of Middle Counsellor. He died in 1149. The records do not mention Reisen as the daughter of Akiyori. Akiyori had a grand-daughter called Reisen but there seems to be some confusion in Chōmei's version.

\(^{40}\) This is a reference to Saigyō's wife. Nothing is known of her identity.

\(^{41}\) According to the Sonpibunmyaku, the daughter of Fujiwara Akiyori was given in marriage to Fujiwara Ieakira who was the son of Fujiwara Ienari. He held third rank and was posted at Harima. He later took the tonsure and died in 1172 at the age of forty five.
would like to see him once and let it go at that." She stole out of the house, accompanied by a messenger, making sure that no one saw her departing.

When she arrived at the cottage next to her house she saw a rugged monk, gaunt and swarthy in appearance, wearing a black habit made of hemp and a surplice, and the sight moved her deeply. Both of them shed tears and exchanged confidences. Although Saigyō had gone far in casting aside all thoughts of the world, the sight of his daughter looking so pure and beautiful, quite unrecognizable from the girl he had seen years ago playing in the dirt, was such that despite his detachment he found it impossible to turn away from her — and this was only to be expected.

Hearing about her circumstances he said, "For years I did not know of your whereabouts, and I have probably seen you for the first time today. Be that as it may, there is a deep bond between every parent and child. Will you listen to what I have to say? I will speak if you are sure that you will not misunderstand me." His daughter replied, "If you are indeed my father, how can I possibly oppose what you say?"

Saigyō then agreed to tell her what he felt. He said, "Since the time you were born, within my heart I have prayed for only one thing — that when you came of age you would become the Empress's lady-in-waiting, or that we could arrange for you to serve an Imperial princess. That I would hear that you had ended up in the employ of a second-ranking household such as this one, I had not imagined even in my dreams. Even if you received splendid support from a gentleman of high rank, when one thinks about the ephemeral nature of this world, it is unlikely that your heart would be free of troubles. So I think that you should join your mother and become a nun, and place yourself in the service of the court of the Buddha. That I think would bespeak true refinement."

His daughter thought for a while and then replied, "Fine. How could I possibly oppose what you have in mind for me? Please decide the day on which I should take the tonsure and I shall come and meet you anywhere at the appointed time." Saigyō was overjoyed, and marvelled repeatedly at the uncommonly noble intent displayed by
one so young. He left after making her promise that she would come to the home of her wet nurse on a particular day which he fixed.

No one knew about all this, and so it was the last thing that anybody would have expected would happen. On the morning before the appointed day, the daughter announced that she would like to have her hair washed. Lady Reisen asked her why she needed to wash her hair when she had done so only recently. The girl merely repeated her request with deep earnestness. Lady Reisen assumed that she wanted to visit the shrine or some such thing and she arranged for her to have her hair washed. The day that the girl had fixed with her father arrived, and she explained that she had to hurry to her wet nurse's home on important business. Her foster mother arranged a carriage for her and saw her off. Just as she was about to mount the carriage the girl went back into the house and, facing her foster mother, looked intently into her face and then, without a word, left the room. She then got into her carriage and went away. Lady Reisen found it all rather strange, but how could she have possibly known what was going on?

A long time passed but the girl had still not returned. Lady Reisen grew worried and visited the wet nurse to ask about her whereabouts. The nurse avoided telling her the truth for a while, but after several days had gone by she could no longer hide what had happened. Lady Reisen had looked after Saigyō's daughter as if she were her own since the girl had been five years old, and had never been separated from her for even a moment. Through the years, the girl had grown up to be a woman who could be relied upon and who in every situation displayed an uncommonly splendid personality. As a result, they had both come to depend on each other, and now that they were parted for so long and so unexpectedly, Lady Reisen would often spend her time weeping and saying to herself with a heart full of resentment, "This shows how much ill-will she bore me. Even the women of the warrior class are obviously extremely fierce and unfeeling." But

It was a common practice to wash one's hair just before shaving one's head in order to enter the priesthood.
she would go on to say, "And yet when she got into the carriage, she came back and, although she had nothing to say to me, she just stood there for a while in front of me and gazed at me intently before leaving. This must mean that she felt regretful about the fact that she would not see me again. This makes me forgive her a little, and angry though I am, I cannot help but be moved."

Eventually Saigyō's daughter became a nun and joined her mother, who had already taken the tonsure, and who lived in a place called Amano at the foot of Mount Koya and devoted herself with the same degree of seriousness as her mother to religious practice. She was truly an extraordinary person.

Her foster mother, Lady Reisen, also devoted herself admirably, later on, to the Buddhist Way. As she was originally a painter, she made it her daily religious observance to work on a painting of the Amida Buddha which was about five metres in height. When she passed away it is said that the figure of this Buddha could be seen appearing in the skies.
When his Lordship Narimichi, Chamberlain, Chief Counsellor, was nine years old, he fell ill with malaria. A certain priest, whose name I do not know, who for many years had chanted prayers for the family, was called in and made to pray on his behalf. But his prayers had no effect and Narimichi's temperature continued to rise. His father Minbukyō Munemichi was particularly distressed, and as he sat beside his son and nursed him, he said to his wife, "Well, what shall we do? This time I think we should certainly call in a different priest. I wonder who would be best." His child heard this and said, "I still feel that you should call in the same priest. I have heard from my wet nurse that this priest has been reciting prayers on my behalf since the time when I was still in my mother's womb. The fact that I have lived for nine years without anything serious befalling me has been entirely due to this priest. To treat him with disrespect now because of my present condition would be really unfortunate. If you were to call in another priest, even if my fever were to drop, it would still fail to please me. Besides, it goes without saying that there is no guarantee that the fever will come down even if you were to ask another priest to recite prayers on my behalf. In any case, my illness is not so grave that I will die of it. If you really care about me, please get our priest to come over several times. In the end I shall probably recover." He spoke painfully, faltering as he went along. Both his father and mother were deeply moved and shed tears. They felt that their way of thinking had fallen far short of that of their son's, even though he was

Fujiwara Narimichi was the son of Fujiwara Munemichi. He was Chamberlain Chief Counsellor and held second rank. He died in 1159. A detailed account of his prowess as a football player and his skill at poetry and music is found in the *Ima Kagami*. Cf. *Ima Kagami zenshaku*, Vol.II, pp 50-2, 57-8, 62-3, 65-6.
so young. On the next propitious day, they invited the regular priest and told him what had happened: "There is nothing to hide. It is not that we thought lightly of you, but seeing our son suffering we lost our senses, and without considering how you would feel, we decided to call in another priest." They also explained how admirably their son, a mere child, had responded. They shed tears as they spoke and so it was hardly likely that would fail to be impressed. On that day, the priest prayed with all his heart, weeping all the while, and he was able to bring down Narimichi's fever dramatically.

This gentleman, Narimichi, possessed such a temperament from an early age. In his dealings with people, no matter whether they were his inferiors or his peers, he always showed them the deepest consideration, and he left behind a reputation of being a person of great refinement. In all respects he was a great sukiibito, and so his heart was not tainted by worldly impurities. Also his ties with women were weak, and hence the bad karma that he carried over to his next life must surely have been of an inconsequential nature.
There was once a monk called Eishū who was distantly related to Yorikiyo, the Intendant of the Hachiman shrine. Although Eishū came from a poor family, his heart was drawn to refined pursuits. All day and night he would do nothing but play his flute. His neighbours were unable to bear the noise, and gradually left their homes. Eventually, there was nobody left in his neighbourhood but this did not upset Eishū in the least. Although he was as destitute as he was, his behaviour was never mean or vulgar and so it was only natural that no one looked down on him. Yorikiyo, hearing of his circumstances, felt sorry for him and sent him the following message: "Why is it that you ask me for nothing? Even those who are not related to me are only too ready to make requests of me whenever they are in trouble. You must not be so formal with me. Please let me know without hesitation if there is any way in which I can help you." Eishū sent him a reply, saying, "I respectfully accept your kind offer. For years now there has been something that I have wanted to ask you for. But given my lowly position, I hesitated to do so out of deference to you. I have something that I deeply desire and would like to come and see you soon to talk about it."

Yorikiyo wondered what troublesome request Eishū would make of him and regretted his gratuitous sympathy for him. But then he dismissed the matter, thinking with contempt, "What big thing could a man of his station ask of me?" Not long after this, one evening around dusk, Eishū appeared before him. Yorikiyo came out to meet him and asked what it was that he wanted. Eishū replied, "What I wish for is no trifling

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44 There is not a great deal of information available about Eishū's life. The Kojidan records that Eishū was well-known as a flute player.
thing and I have thought about it for a long time. And so when I received your message yesterday, I was so delighted that I came to see you straight away." Yorikiyo felt certain that Eishū wanted some of his land. When he questioned him further, the latter replied, "You have a great deal of land in Tsukushi where Chinese bamboo grows. This is bamboo from which flutes of the highest quality are made. I wonder if you would present me with one such flute. This is something that I have yearned for above everything else, but being a person of no consequence, it has been hard for me to obtain one." Yorikiyo found his request so unexpected and touching that he said, "What you ask for is the simplest thing in the world. I shall have it sent to you as soon as possible. Apart from that, is there nothing else that might be of use to you? I am deeply concerned about how you will manage over the coming days and months. Why don't you ask me for some essentials as well?" Eishū replied, "I am extremely grateful to you for your kind consideration, but I lack for nothing. If I receive a single-layered summer robe of the kind I have on, in the second or third month, it will see me through until the tenth month. As for the rest, I entrust my daily needs to fate, and I shall somehow pass the days." Yorikiyo found this deeply moving and uncommonly impressive, and he exclaimed, "This man is a genuine sukimono." He hastened to have the flute procured and sent to Eishū. Although the latter had declined, Yorikiyo kindly arranged for some daily necessities, that would see Eishū through a few months, to be sent to him. As long as these provisions lasted, Eishū invited musicians from the Hachiman shrine to his home. Plying them with wine he spent days playing music in their company. Once he ran out of supplies he reverted again to spending his days and nights alone, playing on his flute. In the end all his practice bore results, for he became an expert who had no peer in the art of flute playing. In what aspect of life could a person with such a heart possibly commit a deep sin?
THE STORY OF TOKIMITSU AND SHIGEMITSU'S TOTAL ABSORPTION WITH MUSIC REACHING THE EMPEROR'S EARS.

Not long ago there was a person called Tokimitsu who was an official in charge of the market place. He was wellknown as a player of the mouth organ. One day he was playing go with Shigemitsu, who was a teacher of the flageolet, and together they began to sing a Gagaku composition. Just when they were beginning to enjoy themselves, there was a message for Tokimitsu asking him to appear immediately in front of the Emperor.

The messenger who conveyed the Imperial summons to Tokimitsu found that the latter paid no attention to it at all, but just continued to sway to the music without uttering a single word in reply. The messenger went back and told the Emperor exactly what had happened. He wondered what kind of punishment the Emperor would mete out to Tokimitsu. But quite contrary to his expectations, the Emperor shed tears and remarked,"Tokimitsu is truly a man worthy of the greatest esteem. How splendid it is that he can be so absorbed in music as to forget everything else. How I regret my position as Emperor. If only I could walk over and listen to them perform!" If one thinks of incidents such as these, one realizes that suki can be specially depended upon as a means to discard all thoughts concerning worldly matters.

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45 His full name was Ōmiwa Tokimitsu. He was the eldest son of Tokinobu. He was wellknown as a flute player of some distinction. There is, however, no available information about the year of his birth or death.

46 Shigemitsu belonged to the Wanibe family. He is believed to have been a pupil of Ujō Shōshi in the art of music.

47 The Emperor at that time would have been Horikawa-in. He himself learnt the flute from Tokimitsu's third son, Tokimoto.
Not long ago, there was a holy man called Hōnichi. When people asked him what kind of religious observance he followed, he would say, "I perform the three religious observances of the day." When pressed further he would reply, "At dawn I recite the following poem:

Dawn has come
On the river-bed of Kamo
The plovers cry.
This day too, in vain,
Shall pass.

At mid-day I recite:

This day too,
The shell has blown
Announcing the time of noon.
The march to death
Draws closer still.

At sunset I recite:

The story about the priest Hōnichi appears in the Senjūshō and the Jikkinshō.

This poem appears in the Goshtishū, Kokkataikan no. 1015, as a poem composed by the priest Enmatsu or Ensho.

The poem appears in a slightly altered form in the Senzaishū as a composition by the poetess Akazome emon. (KTK1197).
I recite these three poems without fail at the appropriate times every day. Thus I meditate on how time passes by every single day." Although this was an extremely unusual practice, as the ways in which people's minds advance vary greatly, so too religious practices cannot but be diverse. In the commandery of Jun in China, the holy man Tanyung made crossing over a bridge his religious practice, one that would lead him across to the Pure Land. The priest Ming Keng from the commandery of Ho reached the Pure Land by punting his boat across the waters. How much more so then, because the Way of Poetry is one which can penetrate to the essence of things, we can depend on it, and, through this medium, calm the mind and meditate on the transience of all worldly things.

The Assistant High Priest Genshin felt that waka constituted the sin of using ornate words, and hence he refused to recite poetry. However one day, at daybreak, while gazing over Lake Biwa, the sight of the boats going back and forth on the waves, shrouded in mist, brought to his mind the poem, "To what shall I compare it, the daybreak?" He was so deeply moved and affected by this experience that from this time onwards he would claim that the sacred teachings and Japanese poetry were in fact one. He also took to composing and reciting poems whenever an appropriate occasion arose.

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51 The poem appears in the Shūishū, KTK 1329 in a slightly altered form. The name of the poet and the topic on which it was composed are unknown.

52 Tanyung is said to have crossed bridges in forty eight places and the merit he acquired from this act enabled him to be reborn in the Pure Land. His life is recorded in the Kaishuōjōden.

53 In the Kaishuōjōden this priest appears under the name Ming Tao. It is said that Ming Tao bought a boat and made it his religious practice to ferry people across the waters and the merit from this deed ensured his rebirth in the Pure Land.

54 This is a poem by the priest Manzei. It appears in the Shūishū, KTK 1327.
Then again, in more recent times, the holy man Rennyo\(^{55}\) remembered a poem that the Empress Teishi\(^{56}\) had composed at the time of her death, and which she tied to the sash of the screen curtains in the hope that the Emperor would see it. The poem was:

\[
\begin{align*}
Yo mosugara & \quad \text{If you have not forgotten} \\
Chigirishi koto o & \quad \text{The pledge we made} \\
Wasurezu wa & \quad \text{Through the night} \\
Koin namida no & \quad \text{Eager am I to see} \\
Iro zo yukashiki & \quad \text{The colour of the tears of love.}^{57}
\end{align*}
\]

Rennyo was deeply moved when this poem came to his mind. Indeed it made such a deep impression on him that, weeping profusely, he recited her poem and chanted the *sonsho dharani*,\(^{58}\) offering them as merit that would work towards her ultimate enlightenment. He kept this up throughout that long winter's night, alternately reciting her poem and the mystical chants, without dozing even once. He was indeed an extraordinary *sukimono*.

Daini no Sukemichi\(^{59}\) was an extremely talented *biwa* player. His pupil Nobuaki was the teacher of Major Counsellor Tsunenobu. This person Sukemichi did not carry out the customary religious practices for adding to his store of merit in future lives. Every day he would just go into the Buddhist prayer hall and play melodies on his *biwa*. He would have someone count the number of his recitals and have them transferred to his accumulated merit for the attainment of rebirth in the Pure Land. Religious devotions

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\(^{55}\) There is no biographical data available on the priest Rennyo.

\(^{56}\) Teishi was the wife of the Emperor Ichijō. She was the daughter of Fujiwara Michitaka. She died at the early age of twenty four in the year 1000.

\(^{57}\) The poem with a headnote explaining that she composed it and left it behind for the Emperor Ichijō appears in the *Goshūishū*, Kokkataikan no. 536. The story about Teishi is included in other works such as *Eiga monogatari*, *Konjaku monogatari*, *Hōbutusushū* and the *Jikkinshō*.

\(^{58}\) This is a magical incantation in eighty seven lines which describes the merit accrued from worshipping the head of the Buddha.

\(^{59}\) Daini no Sukemichi was the son of Uda Genji Narimasa. He held second rank and occupied the post of Imperial Advisor. He was renowned as a *biwa* player. According to the *Biwa ketsumyaku*, he was the pupil of Nobuaki and the teacher of Tsunenobu. He died in 1060.
are dependant on actual performance as well as the sincerity of one's intentions, and thus there is no way in which such practices can be condemned as worthless. In particular the practice of *suki* is one in which a person finds no pleasure in mingling in society. He does not lament even if he falls into straitened circumstances. He is moved by the blooming and scattering of the cherry blossoms. He calms the mind by meditating on the waxing and waning of the moon. He makes it his principle not to be tainted by worldly impurities. As a result of this, the fundamental truth of the transient nature of life reveals itself to him of its own accord, and any attachment he may have had to fame and wealth also comes to an end. This is the first step towards achieving escape from the cycle of births and deaths and entering *nirvana*.

During the Hōgen period, there were upheavals in the world and the cloistered Emperor Sutoku moved to Sanuki.\(^\text{60}\) His make-shift dwelling there was indescribably humble and awe-inspiring. The soldiers of the provinces guarded his place from morning to night. The *sukihijiri* Rennyo, about whom I spoke earlier, heard that it was very difficult for anyone to go and visit the Emperor in his place of exile. Being fundamentally a person who felt the deepest sympathy for others, Rennyo was extremely saddened by the situation. However he did not know anybody who could have granted him permission to pay the Emperor a visit. Rennyo himself had merely heard about the Emperor's activities through his younger sister, who had been in his service. Also, earlier, when he had been employed by the court as an officer in charge of *kagura*,\(^\text{61}\) he had on rare occasions caught a glimpse of the Emperor during the performance of these dances. His contact with the Emperor then was not of the kind that would lead one to expect such extremity of grief. Nonetheless, he set off specially, all by himself, carrying his box of personal belongings on his back, down to Sanuki.

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\(^{60}\) Emperor Sutoku belonged to one of the rival factions that took part in the Hōgen insurrection of 1156. His faction lost and so he was banished to Sanuki.

\(^{61}\) This was a dance performed in front of the Shinto shrine to the accompaniment of music as a mark of respect to the Shinto deities.
When he reached the Emperor's dwelling he found it hard to look at the place—such was the awful condition it was in. It was even more desolate than what people had described it as being. So unswerving was the depth of his commitment to enter the place that he spent the day trying to find an unguarded spot through which he could sneak in. However the soldiers who were standing guard soundly reprimanded him, and there was no way of hiding himself. The day passed in vain, and in the light of the moon, Rennyo wandered around outside the precincts, playing on his flute.

As he stood there wondering what to do, around day-break a man wearing a hunting robe that had turned black from use, emerged from within. Rennyo was delighted to see him, and was given permission to enter the precincts. He found that the grass had grown thick everywhere, the ground was covered deep with dew and there was not a sound of a single human being about. Extremely saddened by the sight, he stood there for a while grieving, and wrote the following poem on a piece of wood and gave it to the man, requesting him to show it to the Emperor:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Asakura ya} \\
\text{Ki no marodono ni} \\
\text{Irinagara} \\
\text{Kimi ni shirareda} \\
\text{Kaeru kanashisa}
\end{align*}
\]

The man came back immediately with a reply from the Emperor. When Rennyo looked at it in the light of the moon, he found the following poem addressed to him:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Asakura ya} \\
\text{Tada itazura ni} \\
\text{Kaesu ni mo} \\
\text{Tsuru suru ama no} \\
\text{Ne o nomi zo naku}
\end{align*}
\]

The place Asakura in Chikuzen (now in Fukuoka prefecture) was where Empress Saimei (655-661) is said to have built a make-shift dwelling from unpeeled lumber. Rennyo is likening the Emperor Sōtoku's abode to this dwelling. The poem is an allusive variation on the composition by Emperor Tenchi, which is found in the Shinkokinshū, Kokkataikan, no. 1687.
Rennyo was deeply struck with awe and reverence, and putting the poem in his travelling box, he returned to the capital, weeping all the while.
There was once a holy man named Kakuno who lived by the grave of Shōtoku Taishi. His love of music was far beyond the ordinary. He would spend his days and nights fashioning *biwa* and *koto* out of planks and playing on them with bird feathers which he used as plectrums. Or he would borrow some bamboo and cut out flutes from them. Playing on the flute, he would lose himself in the music and enjoy himself greatly. He would shed tears and utter the following words, "How wonderful must be the sound of the music of the bodhisattvas and their entourage." As he made it a habit to spend his time fashioning instruments, there were always a large number of them scattered around the place. Not surprisingly, they became the playthings of children who would often take them away and lose them. Kakuno, being a short tempered man, would shout at them, calling them names. After several years had passed, he died just as he had wished, with the sound of music playing in his ears. Even after his death, his body did not decay for a long time and so the people who lived in the neighbourhood gathered around him and revered him even more and thought of him as a Buddha. On the forty ninth day his body vanished and was not to be seen. As this happened only fifty years ago there must still be people around who are now very old, who saw it happen. Thus even music can become a religious observance that ensures the attainment of salvation for those who believe in it as a religious practice.

In recent times there was a holy man who is reputed to have possessed great virtue. Whenever people met him they would ask him what religious observance he followed. When asked the question, "What particular religious observance do you
follow and which of the Pure Lands do you pray to be reborn into?" he would respond by saying, "There is no Pure Land in particular that I pray for. I merely contrive never to do, under any circumstances, anything that has been proscribed by the Buddha. Similarly, I encourage myself to do, to the utmost of my abilities, those acts which the Buddha has recommended for us. It is the Buddha who will judge where it is that I should be sent. Without knowing what the Buddha has in mind for us, how can we presume to ask for one kind of Pure Land or the other?" The depth of his will must have matched the Buddha's intent because he ended his life wondrously, breathing his last while still sitting. It is said that his hands which had formed themselves into a mudra continued to stay in that position for two or three days after he had passed away. Even if there is a great deal of merit to be obtained through one's own abilities, it is still hard to realize the attainment of salvation without praying for it. For example there is a saying, "Even if an ox has the strength, if there is no person to drive it, it will not go in the direction in which it is meant to proceed." Nonetheless, it is a fact that human beings have very different inclinations. For this man to have firmly made up his mind to rely on the plans that the Buddha had for him, was truly worthy of the greatest esteem.

Not long ago there was a learned scholar of Chinese who fell seriously ill. When his last moments were close at hand, his spiritual guide visited him and urged him to recite the nembutsu. However the scholar's mind was so steeped in images of the wind and the moon [i.e. poetry], to which he had been excessively attached over the years, that he appeared to be unable to concentrate his thoughts on the Pure Land. At this point, the priest, who was probably a man of great discernment, stopped recommending the nembutsu and for a while talked to the scholar about poetry and other

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63 It was believed that apart from the Pure Land that was situated in the west in which the Amitabha Buddha lived, there were a range of other Pure Lands in different directions in which the various Buddhas resided. These were called the Pure Lands of the ten directions and it was believed that there were as many as two hundred ten, hundred million Pure Lands. Depending on the Buddhist sect one belonged to, one would pray to be reborn in one of these Pure Lands.

64 A similar story appears in the Jikkinshō. The scholar of Chinese in this version is identified as Sugawara Buntoki. Cf. Jikkinshō, p 166.
matters that interested him. When it looked as though the scholar was satisfied and felt that he had talked to someone who really understood him, the priest said, "For years now you have composed unexcelled verse. You will undoubtedly leave behind Chinese poetry of the highest acclaim. What a pity that you have not composed a single verse on the Pure Land. It is true that there are many beautiful sights in this world which are hard to cast away. Imagine how many more poetic conceptions the beauties of the Pure Land will inspire within you!" As the scholar's mind was steeped in the beauty of nature, he envisioned before him the realm of the Pure Land in all its details and this served as a means by which his faith was awakened. He proceeded to recite the nembutsu and died as he would have desired, with thoughts of being reborn in the Pure Land. The spiritual guide who is present during the last moments of a person's life must be one who understands well the working of people's minds.

Some people say that this was the story about the monk Yasutane but as he was a strict adherent of the religious path, I do not believe that at the moment of his death, he would have let other thoughts interfere with his contemplation of the Pure Land.

There was once a lady called Yoshida no Saigū. She fell seriously ill and when the end was approaching, the priest Yakunin from Ohara visited her as her spiritual guide and urged her to recite the nembutsu. At that time the lady appeared uncommonly in command of herself and proceeded to recite a variety of important sections from the sutras and passed away in a manner worthy of the greatest esteem.

Those who were in attendance on the lady shed tears and were filled with reverence for her. The priest obviously had something in mind for he fell asleep while reciting the nembutsu and [after her death] he did not get up and depart straight away. Everyone found his behaviour strange. After some time had passed, the lady came back to life. Four hours later she no longer looked her former self — she appeared extremely

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65 This was the Empress Kenshi Nishino, wife of the cloistered Emperor Toba. For seven years from 1143 she was the High Priestess of the Ise shrine. She gave up her position due to an illness and became a nun. She died in 1161.
weak and breathed with difficulty. The priest said, "This is in fact the moment when she is going to pass away. Her appearance earlier [when she looked as though she had died] did not convince me" and went away. Everyone said that the lady's salvation had been effected due to the virtue of the priest. It was without doubt a devil who had created the illusion that she had in fact died and attained salvation on the previous occasion. One must understand well that such things can happen.

Then again, there was the case of a certain person who, when on the point of death, was urged by his spiritual guide to recite the nembutsu but who refused to utter a word. When it looked as though no amount of talking would have any effect on him, the guide thought that the man was hard of hearing and so, pressing his mouth close to his ears, he spoke to him at the top of his voice. The man had appeared to have reached the point when he was about to die and this time he recovered. He later told people, "The sound of his voice reciting the nembutsu loudly in my ears affected my whole body with such intensity that I found it quite unbearable. At such a time I couldn't possibly think about the Pure Land or anything of that kind." What he says is very likely to have happened and one must be prepared for such eventualities, which is why I am recording this incident here.
APPENDIX II

"THE INCIDENT ABOUT KAMO NO CHÔMEI"
(AN EXCERPT FROM THE MINAMOTO IENAGA NIKKI)¹

People who devote themselves to any one thing, no matter how inconsequential, are bestowed with extraordinary favours by the Emperor. And yet, Kamo no Chômei failed to realize his aspirations! This, I have been told, is entirely because of his karma from previous lives. Anyhow, this person Chômei, after becoming an orphan, ceased to take part in affairs relating to the shrine, and lived in seclusion. But because of his reputation in the field of poetry he was summoned by the Emperor, and he soon became an official at the Bureau of Poetry. From that time onwards he would take part in all functions relating to poetry, and he composed poems at all the regular poetry contests. He never left the Bureau, and worked there day and night with the greatest diligence. Just around the time when the Emperor contemplated bestowing his favours on Chômei, should some appropriate occasion arise, the post of head official (negi) fell vacant at the Lower Kamo shrine. Everyone was convinced that this time the Emperor would make sure that Chômei would get the post. Even before Chômei had expressed his interest in this appointment, it looked very much as though it would be his. When this rumour came to Chômei's ears, he appeared unable to control his tears of joy.

The then head of the Lower Kamo shrine, Sukekane, heard of these plans and sent the following petition to the Emperor, "It is not customary among officials of the shrine to break the hierarchy set up by their court rank. My eldest son is Junior Fifth Rank. Although Chōmei is older than he, perhaps because of his feeling that he is a person of no consequence, he has involved himself but little in matters to do with the shrine. My son Sukeyori may be only a child compared with Chōmei, but the way in which he has worked day and night at the shrine far exceeds anything that Chōmei has done. Without question, the Gods see this clearly. Even if my son's commitment to his duties at the shrine were to be lacking in any way, how could the prayers of his father for the longevity of the Emperor go unanswered? It would not do to treat the eldest son of the highest official of the Kamo shrine as one might others. This applies not only to the shrine in question." Thus he appealed to the Emperor in a grandiose manner, claiming that what he had set out was a divine decree. There was nothing special about Chōmei's position that stood in his favour. It was just that the Emperor, who had in the first place summoned him to court because of his excellence in poetry, did not want it all to come to nothing. However, even the other officials [who were not related to the shrine] grieved and protested in an uncommon way over the proposed bypassing of the hierarchy of rank for no special reason. It was to be expected then that the shrine officials went further and insisted that the divine decree of the Gods should be accorded first place. Hearing all this, the Emperor felt that everything was in Sukekane's favour. The Emperor then decided to upgrade a smaller shrine that was affiliated to the main Kamo shrine, accord it the same status as the latter, and to create the post of head official for this shrine, to which Chōmei could then be appointed.

This was truly a rare and felicitious act on the part of the Emperor. Over and above the fact that Chōmei would thus be able to fulfil his desire to become head official, I was sure that he would also be delighted at the thought that, because of him, a subsidiary shrine would be elevated to the same position as the main shrine, and that he would thus contribute to the glory of the Kamo shrine. However the fact that Chōmei
turned down the Emperor's offer, stubbornly saying that he had failed to get what he had wanted in the first place, made me go so far as to wonder if he was not out of his right mind. After that I heard that he had gone into seclusion - no ordinary matter. He did not say where he was, but after some time had elapsed, he sent fifteen poems that he had composed to the Emperor. Among them was the following:

**Sumiwabinu**  
*Weary of life,*  
*Ge ni ya miyama no*  
*Here deep in the mountains,*  
*Maki no ha ni*  
*Must I really behold the moon*  
*Kumoru to iihi*  
*Clrowned over by the pine trees*  
*Tsuki o miru beki*  
*Of which I had spoken?*

When Chōmei had been summoned to the court by the Emperor a poetry contest had taken place, and among the poems that Chōmei had composed, the Emperor had considered the following poem, written on the topic, 'the moon deep in the mountains', particularly impressive:

**Yomosugara**  
*All through the night*  
*Hitori miyama no*  
*Alone in the mountain depths*  
*Maki no ha ni*  
*I gaze at the moon*  
*Kumoru mo sumeru*  
*Clounded over by the pine leaves*  
*Ariake no tsuki*  
*Now at dawn, it shines through clearly*

Everyone remarked that the way in which Chōmei had alluded to his earlier poem and used the phrase,'deep in the mountains must I really' in the poem he sent to the Emperor was extremely moving. However I could not help feeling that his extremely stubborn temperament would ruin everything. After this, the rumour was that he had taken the tonsure and was quietly carrying on with his religious practices at Ōhara. I felt that he was a person who carried things too far. On the other hand, Chōmei probably thought of this world as a deluded dream in which, due to certain karmic links from previous lives, he had been strongly fated to enter the True Path.
The Emperor asked me to find out if Chōmei still had the biwa (lute) called tenarai, and so I sent a messenger up to Ōhara to make inquiries. Chōmei sent back the lute with the following poems written on the plectrum:

- **Kakushitsutsu**
- **Mine no arashi no**
- **Oto nomi ya**
- **Tsui ni waga mi o**
- **Hanarezarubeki**

Parting with this,
In the end only the sound
Of the storm
On the mountain peaks
Will keep me company.

- **Haraubeki**
- **Koke no sode ni mo**
- **Tsuuyu shi areba**
- **Tsumoreru chiri wa**
- **Ima mo sanagara**

Here it is
Still in its dusty state.
I was unable to wipe it
For the sleeves of my priestly robes
Are drenched in tears.

On seeing these, the Emperor ordered me to compose some poems in reply, and so I wrote the following verses:

- **Kore o miru**
- **Sode ni mo fukaki**
- **Tsuuyu shi areba**
- **Harawanu chiri wa**
- **Nao mo sanagara**

As I look at it
My sleeves too
Are so deeply soaked in tears
That the unwiped dust
Remains as yet untouched.

- **Yama fukaku**
- **Irinishi hito o**
- **Kakochite mo**
- **Nakaba no tsuki o**
- **Katami to wa minu**

Thinking sadly
Of the one who has just entered
Deep into the mountains,
I look at the half-moon -
My only memento.²

After that when I met him again quite by chance, he had grown so thin and shrunken that I could hardly recognize him. He said, "If I had not deeply resented the society I lived in, the darkness of this fleeting world would not have become illuminated

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² The stop on the surface of a biwa is shaped in the form of a half-moon and hence the use of the phrasenakaba no tsuki to mean the biwa.
for me", and weeping copiously, he wrung the sleeves of his priestly robes, drenched in tears. He went on, "Although I have cast aside thoughts of worldly life, there is still something that holds me back a little", and pulled out from his sutra bag the plectrum of the biwa on which I had written the replies to his poems. He added, "Somehow this will accompany me beneath the moss and decay, with my body." The fact that it was so hard for him to forget and reject completely what he had set his heart upon, and which he even felt would be a hindrance to the religious path, made me feel very sorry for him.
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