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Soteriology in the Female-Spirit Noh Plays of Konparu Zenchiku

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in East Asian Languages and Literatures

by

Matthew Chudnow

Dissertation Committee:
Associate Professor Susan Blakeley Klein, Chair
Professor Emerita Anne Walthall
Professor Michael Fuller

2017

DEDICATION

To

my Grandmother

and my friend Kristen

オンバサラダルマキリソワカ

Windows rattle with contempt,
Peeling back a ring of dead roses.
Soon it will rain blue landscapes,
Leading us to suffocation.
The walls structured high in a circle of oiled brick
And legs of tin- Stonehenge tumbles.

Rozz Williams
Electra Descending

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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FIELD OF STUDY

Medieval Japanese literature, religion, and performance.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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By

Matthew Chudnow

Doctor of Philosophy in East Asian Languages and Literatures

University of California, Irvine, 2017

Associate Professor Susan Blakeley Klein, Chain

Salvation is a central concept in multiple religious doctrines. In East Asia, Mahāyāna Buddhism's universal soteriology doctrine influences all facets of the religion. Despite this, the tradition displays incongruities in actual ethical practice. One is the representation of women and their potential for enlightenment. An example is manifested in Noh theatre, Japan's masked drama of the Muromachi period (1337-1557). Noh acts as a vector for Buddhist soteriological discourse and popular medieval shamanic beliefs, providing a window into this gendered ethical conflict. It is presented in sharpest relief through the genre of "female-spirit Noh" (*katsura mono*, or "wig plays"). Featuring dense religious language, utilization of shamanic ritual, and ambiguous soteriological status for its female characters, female-spirit Noh displayed an amalgam of contemporaneous religious concepts present at multiple levels of Muromachi society. I argue that as a living theatrical tradition dating to medieval Japan, Noh theater provides scholars insight into the religious dynamics of the medieval era, with the female-spirit plays of Konparu Zenchiku (1405-1468) giving one of the clearest examples of this complex soteriological conflict. By placing critical works back into their original religious, historic, and social context, I directly address the religious conflict of gender inequality within Buddhist soteriological discourse.

INTRODUCTION:
**Addressing the Problematic Status of Female Soteriology within
Muromachi Noh Plays**

The concept of salvation is central to the ethical foundations of the world's major religious institutions. In the case of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the dominant form of Buddhist practice in East Asia, soteriological concepts and their accompanying methodologies dictate the religion's sacred textual history, ritual practice, social organization, and ethical philosophy. While promoting itself as a cosmically and phenomenologically universal religion guided by precepts focused on the salvation of all sentient beings, Mahāyāna Buddhism displays incongruities in actual ethical practice in the areas of gender and social equality. One such incongruity is the representation of women and their potential for enlightenment. At multiple steps, be they physical, moral, or spiritual, women are severely disadvantaged with regard to achieving enlightenment, and thus salvation. An exceptionally vibrant and compelling example of this is manifested in Noh theatre, Japan's masked drama that first developed and flourished at the height of the Muromachi period (室町時代, 1337-1557). One of the world's oldest living theatrical traditions, Noh is a vector for both elite Buddhist soteriological discourse and popular medieval shamanic beliefs, providing a unique window into this gendered ethical conflict at the core of Japanese Buddhism. Within Noh, the conflict is presented in sharpest relief in plays from the Third Category (鬘物, *katsura mono*, or "wig plays"), works with female-spirits as the main characters of dramatic action (female-spirit plays). Featuring dense religious language, utilization of shamanic ritual, and often ambiguous or even torturous soteriological status for its female characters trapped in the cycle of rebirth, female-spirit plays display an amalgam of contemporaneous religious beliefs and practices present at multiple levels of Muromachi society.

The problematic soteriological status of female-spirits in Noh theatre, particularly versus their male counterparts, raises several religious ethical questions and concerns regarding gender within Japanese Buddhism and the greater Mahāyāna tradition. The potential for women to achieve enlightenment, *nyonin jōbutsu* (女人成仏) in Japanese, has been a subject of controversy in the history of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The *Lotus Sutra*¹ is one of the primary conceptual sources within Japanese Buddhism regarding female soteriological concepts, but also presents multiple contentions. These are found within the parable of the Naga or Dragon Princess, an influential passage of the text in Japan where the serpentine yet pious Dragon Princess demonstrates nearly instantaneous enlightenment, but must first magically transform into a male-form before achieving Buddhahood. This passage from the *Lotus Sutra* thus appears to present a paradox for women, demonstrating female enlightenment as a potentiality contingent on combined ontological and phenomenological impossibilities. The *Lotus Sutra* played a major role in shaping the philosophical and historical trajectory of Japanese Buddhism as the central text of the Heian period (平安時代, 794-1185) Tendai sect (天台) and later Kamakura period (平安時代, 1185-1333) Nichiren sect (日蓮),² two schools whose religious teachings, political influence, and subsequent offshoots have gone on to dominate Japanese religious, cultural, and political life until the present day.³ The sutra also exerted an exceptional influence on Japanese literature: the

¹ 妙法蓮華經, Sk. *Saddharma puṇḍarīka sūtra*, C. *Miàofǎ Liánhuá jīng*, J. *Myōhō renga-kyō*; "Sūtra on the White Lotus of the Sublime Dharma." Composed between the first and second centuries in India. Buswell and Lopez, *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 729. Leon Hurvitz's translation *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (The Lotus Sutra)* was utilized for this study.

² Buswell and Lopez, *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 730.

³ Tendai Buddhist and Nichiren institutions remain entrenched in the Japanese Buddhist landscape and continue traditional doctrinal practice within the community at a local and national level. The Nichiren-derived lay movement of Sōka Gakkai (創価学会, founded in the 1930s) is one of the largest religious organizations in Japan today, boasting tens of millions of followers in one-hundred and ninety-two countries around the world on its international website, www.sgi.org. (accessed 8/15/17)

parable of the Dragon Princess becoming the *de facto* representation of female soteriology. Noh participates in this complex, even self-contradictory, ambivalence towards female salvation in female-spirit Noh, plays where the soteriological plight of the female main character can be read allegorically as representative of all women.

When examining the rich and complex history of Japanese Buddhism, performance is often not a primary focus of academic study. Nevertheless, I would argue that as a living theatrical tradition dating back to medieval Japan, Noh theater provides scholars an invaluable insight into the religious dynamics of the premodern era. With its ancient roots in multiple Buddhist temple and shamanic *kami* (神, indigenous gods of Japan) ritual performance traditions, Noh developed by the early fifteenth century into a multifaceted drama integrating dance, song, and poetry. It is one of several artistic genres that arose in the Muromachi period that have subsequently come to epitomize “traditional” Japanese culture, a process that involved erasing the relationship of individual plays to their original historical context. That is, although Noh came into existence amidst political and religious turmoil, there existed prior trends in modern scholarship to read Noh plays as purely aestheticized objects, without paying attention to their religious or political resonances. My dissertation is aimed at remedying that lacuna by focusing on how female-spirit Noh plays written during the Muromachi period directly address the ethical and religious conflict of gender inequality within Buddhist soteriological discourse. I do so by placing certain exemplary works of the genre back into their original religious, historical, ritual, and social context.

The art form of Noh was tailor-made for engaging in this complex socio-religious dynamic. The genre had its origins in multiple ritual performance traditions before being synthesized in the fourteenth century to form *sarugaku* (猿楽), Noh’s direct ancestor. Two playwrights were influential in defining Noh theater as a philosophically and religiously charged art form. Innovative actor and playwright Zeami Motokiyo (世阿弥元清, 1363-

1443) superficially secularized the art form to appeal to the elite military government patronage of the time, but his plays remained structurally linked to Noh's religious origins. Zeami was best known for creating *mugen* (夢幻, dream-vision),⁴ recognized today as one of the performance tradition's classic dramatic plot structures. In these plays, the *shite* (シテ, main actor), usually a type of spirit, achieves enlightenment by asking for and receiving spiritual assistance from a Buddhist monk, played by the *waki* (ワキ, side actor). This plot line was instantiated especially in his *shuramono* (修羅物, warrior) plays, which showcased the bringing of enlightenment to the souls of dead warriors, especially historical figures from the late-Heian Genpei conflict (源平合戦, 1180-1185), which precipitated the rise and establishment of the Kamakura Shogunate (鎌倉幕府) and was memorialized in Kamakura period texts such as *Heike monogatari* (平家物語, The Tale of Heike) and *Genpei seisuiki* (源平盛衰記, Record of the Rise and Fall of the Genpei). He wrote far fewer female-spirit plays, with his female characters frequently descending into madness rather than ascending to enlightenment. Konparu Zenchiku (金春禅竹, 1405-1468) was Zeami's son-in-law and uses many of the elder playwright's compositional elements, such as the dream-vision Noh plot structure. The problem of Buddhist enlightenment was treated as centrally important for female-spirit characters in Zenchiku's dramas, and yet their soteriological status at the end of the play is often ambiguous. This key element of Zenchiku's plays makes his dramaturgy ideal for examination of the soteriological conflict lying at the heart of the structure of his Third Category Noh featuring female-spirit characters in primary roles.

This study takes a multidisciplinary approach centered on the theoretical and methodological components of critical textual analysis, New Historicism, and religious studies with an emphasis on analyzing of role of women within medieval Japanese

⁴ The term *mugen nō* was first used by scholar Sanari Kentarō (佐成謙太郎, 1890-1966) in a 1926 radio broadcast. Quinn, *Developing Zeami*, 323.

combinatory religious discourse. This approach is innovative in the field of traditional Japanese theater studies for multiple reasons. Both Japanese and Western scholarship on medieval Japanese theater has often looked at the field from a depoliticized point of view. This stance is based on multiple historical factors.⁵ The first was due to the Tokugawa military government becoming the official patrons of the Noh theater troupes in the early seventeenth century. Led by the *bushi* (武士) class, the Tokugawa explicitly forbid the performance of political or proselytizing plays, as such works might undermine their authority. Noh transformed from a popular theatrical form into a ritual performance that its main purpose was to symbolically reinforce the superiority of the ruling elite.⁶ Noh troupes temporarily lost their patronage with the fall of the Tokugawa during the Meiji Restoration (1868), but experienced resurgence during Japan's rise as an industrial, military, and colonial power in the twentieth century under the newly modernized government. Implicit and occasionally overt censorship encouraged the performance of plays emphasizing the glory of Japan and its "national culture."⁷ In the Post-War period, the rise of New Criticism, with its emphasis on reading plays via the aesthetics of symbolism rather than as political or religious allegory, encouraged a lack of interest in historically contextualizing plays. Only in the past twenty years have scholars begun to consider that Noh plays were written with specific political and religious intentions. Finally, as scholars have begun to look beyond

⁵ For historical studies examining the socio-political and economic factors effecting Noh theater and its practitioners, please refer to Eric C. Rath, *The Ethos of Noh* and Thomas D. Looser, *Visioning Eternity: Aesthetics, Politics, and History in the Early Modern Noh Theater*.

⁶ Please refer to chapter 1 of Thomas D. Looser's *Visioning Eternity*, a discussion on how patronage of Noh and adaptation of the art as the military government's official *shikigaku* (ritual entertainment) gave the Tokugawa shogunate cultural capital and control over the spiritual realm. This was enacted through performance of Noh at purification rituals, official state celebrations, and other ceremonial function associated with the Ieyasu cult at Nikkō Shrine.

⁷ Eric C. Rath explores the historical development of Noh theater troupes, with detailed focus on their internal organization systems and adaptation of performance traditions to address the shifting socio-historic conditions of governmental patronage. See Rath, *The Ethos of Noh*, chapters 4-6.

performative and symbolic readings, disciplinary issues have emerged. This has resulted in an academic tendency to approach Noh scholarship as defined by an individual disciplinary field, with only a few scholarly works recently breaking this trend by publishing multidisciplinary studies. My methodology, which crosses disciplinary boundaries by relocating Noh back into its historical and religious context, while paying close attention to plays' rhetorical and performative structure, will enable me to explore the wider religious, historical, and gender problematics evidenced in these works.

Given that the playwright Konparu Zenchiku's primary patron was the powerful Nara religious institution of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex (春日興福寺), I am interested in what effect that patronage system may have effected on the composition of his female-spirit Noh plays. It is important to note that the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex was an exemplar of the *honji suijaku* paradigm during the Muromachi period. As will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2, the *honji suijaku* paradigm (本地垂迹, the buddhas as original enlightenment, the *kami* as traces) was the dominant mode of religious discourse in medieval Japan where Buddhism, *kami* worship, and other religious and philosophical systems constructed a combinatory religiosity informing every level of spiritual belief.⁸ Although Kōfukuji, the Buddhist temple arm of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex, was historically the powerful aristocratic Fujiwara clan's tutelary temple and served as the base for the Hōsso sect, its primary spiritual concern by Zenchiku's time was the administration of the Kasuga Grand Shrine, one of the main *kami* worship centers on the local and national level, with the main Buddhist clergy of the temple seen as mortal emissaries of the primary divinity, Kasuga Daimyōjin (春日大明神).

⁸ Teeuwen and Rambelli, "Introduction: combinatory religion and the *honji suijaku* paradigm in pre-modern Japan," in *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*, 4-7.

Zenchiku's plays raise multiple questions about medieval Japanese Buddhist soteriology in general and the female case in particular. Whereas select works, such as *Tamakazura* (玉鬘, The Jeweled Chaplet), portray female-spirits achieving enlightenment, many of Zenchiku's works leave the female *shite* (main character) in ambiguous or even torturous soteriological situations. In the play *Nonomiya* (野宮, The Shrine of the Fields), the spirit of Lady Rokujō (六条御息所) is left to wander between Buddhist realms of existence, her karmic plight in a state of flux. The play *Yōkihi* (楊貴妃, Precious Consort Yang) is even more explicit in its depiction of female-spiritual suffering, with the *shite* as Yang Guifei (J. *Yōkihi*) locked in emotional and spiritual pain as she awaits her eventual decay and reincarnation.

How do we explain these discrepancies if, as noted above, the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex was the primary patronage support for the Konparu troop led by Zenchiku? Unfortunately, as information about when the plays were written or their intended audience is not available, we as contemporary scholars are unable to employ direct historical contextualization to answer these questions concerning problems relating to denial of enlightenment or its overall ambiguity within Zenchiku's female-spirit Noh plays. Instead, it may be more fruitful to consider the following points: how does the text of Noh, itself grounded within the poetic traditions of the medieval era, function in conjunction with the then-contemporary religious and socio-political context, especially regarding issues of female gender and sexuality? Furthermore, how have these contextual circumstances affected the textual construction of Noh plays? My research has shown that other, more complexly intertwined religious and socio-political dynamics are at work in Zenchiku's dramaturgy.

My analytical methodology is based on three interrelated approaches to textual analysis while also attempting to place the respective works back into their original historic, religious, and sociological context. The first approach is predicated on the textual

construction of Noh plays themselves. Noh plays are densely layered rhetorical weaves of allusive poetic variation and textual citation. Being highly informed by the medieval art of *renga* (連歌, linked verse poetry), itself based on *waka* poetry (和歌), untangling the disparate threads of the text means that my research has not been limited to the study of Noh texts (謡曲, *yōkyoku*). The allusions to source materials (本説, *honzetsu*), including medieval commentaries on these sources, are of primary importance when understanding the plays' intrinsic meanings. These source materials range from Heian period classics of Japanese literature to contemporaneous medieval popular stories; from poetry and stories of China's Tang Dynasty to works of sacred Buddhist scripture. By tracing the literary, religious, and historical content and context of these sources, and how they were interpreted in the Muromachi period, along with an analysis of the political and historical climate of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex in relation to Zenchiku's patronage situation, a more profound understanding of Buddhist soteriological concerns for female-spirits as represented in the playwright's dramaturgy can be achieved.

A primary example of this methodology at work is demonstrated in my explication of Zenchiku's play *Yōkihi*. Based upon the narrative poem by Chinese Tang poet Bai Juyi (白居易, 772-846), *Chang hen ge* (長恨歌, Song of Everlasting Sorrow, J. *Chōgonka*), Zenchiku's play relates the sorrow of the spirit of the Tang beauty, Yang Guifei, as she languishes on the immortal isle of Penglai. She is visited by a Daoist wizard who relates the Tang Emperor's great longing for his lost love and asks for some sign of Yang's soul to take back to his master. Yang gives him a hairpin, dances, and intones the famous closing lines of Bai Juyi's poem. While Zenchiku's play is full of direct poetic allusions to the original Chinese source, it is also structured by allusions to the Japanese literary classic *Genji monogatari* (源氏物語, The Tale of Genji). Bai Juyi's poem served as an important source text for the opening chapter of *Genji* and by Zenchiku's time the Chinese original was firmly entrenched in

reception of the Heian period narrative. Therefore, the female-spirit of Yang Guifei in *Yōkihi* must be viewed through the Heian and later medieval receptions of Bai Juyi's original text as well as the independent threads of the *Genji* itself. Each aspect of textual reception includes its own corpus of texts and reception history, with their respective conceptualization of the soteriological status of the female characters involved. A similarly complex process of unweaving the dense textual fabric of the other Noh plays examined in this study is necessary to demonstrate how the female-spirit at the center of each play develops and functions within the dramaturgy.

My second approach is to carefully examine the implications that a character's geographic location has upon their soteriological status. More specifically, I unpack the religious and poetic references that connect a specific character to her physical surroundings, surroundings that inhibit or encourage her attainment of Buddhist enlightenment. In almost all instances, Noh plays take place in spiritually charged spaces that directly affect the drama. The setting of the play could even be viewed as one of the central characters in the drama itself. If we compare the example of Zenchiku's two direct *Genji monogatari*-themed plays, *Tamakazura* and *Nonomiya*, this concept becomes apparent. *Tamakazura* is set at the Hatsusedera Buddhist complex (初瀬寺) and focuses on the miraculous power of the image of the Eleven-Headed Kannon Bodhisattva (十一面観音菩薩, *Jūichimen Kannon bosatsu*) enshrined there. *Nonomiya* is set at the Shrine of the Fields (Nonomiya) from the original *Genji monogatari* (a religious site in disuse by Zenchiku's time), where the main character of Rokujō struggles to find release from her obsessive love in this *kami* worship shrine setting, but at the drama's close remains caught within the shrine's *torii* (鳥居) gate. As I will discuss below, when examining Zeami's performance treatises and the dynamics of their transmission to Zenchiku, the establishment of appropriate dramatic settings via *honzetsu* sources was central to the composition of the play's central characters. As defined by Shelley Fenno

Quinn, *honzetsu* drew from the Japanese literary canon of written texts and oral myths, and thus,

typically provides the source material on which the composition [of the Noh play] as a whole is based, the *shite*'s identity, and the outline of the plot coming from it.⁹

If this is the case, then might the religious and ontological associations of geographical locations found within a play's *honzetsu* be a vital factor in the soteriological resolution of these performances? The demarcation and ritual purification of sacred space was a critical principle to the combinatorial *honji suijaku* paradigm that defined medieval religiosity, making a historicized analysis of the religious and ontological status of location and space within a play's various *honzetsu* essential to the understanding of its soteriological dynamics.

Additionally, as I will discuss in more detail below, political conflicts at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex, their impact on Zenchiku's patronage situation, and the potential impact on his outlook on sacred space, is also vital to that understanding.

Lastly, I apply a systematic analysis of the densely layered rhetorical weaves of allusive poetic variation and textual citation of each play. This involves two distinct activities: tracking the multiple textual citations and poetic allusions (本歌取り, *honkadori*) to canonical works for symbolic and allusive resonance—and identifying the utilization of religious (frequently Buddhist) language and textual sources for their distinct meaning. Allegoresis was central to medieval combinatorial understanding of language and plays an important role in delineating the overall utilization of Buddhist textual sources in Noh theater, particularly referring to soteriological matters.¹⁰ Seemingly non-Buddhist words and phrases, when cross-referenced with Buddhist texts and related writings, may reveal deeper Buddhological symbolism and meaning. These three approaches provide me with insight into

⁹ Quinn, *Developing Zeami*, 138.

¹⁰ See chapter 3 of Klein, *Dancing the Dharma: Religious and Political Allegory in Noh Theater*.

how Buddhist textual sources, (such as sutras, *setsuwa* [説話] or folk tale collections, and *engi* [縁起] or temple and shrine histories) and religious language inform the overall structure and significance of Noh plays.

My findings through this research reveal that achieving enlightenment for female-spirits in the *honji suijaku* world of Konparu Zenchiku is a complex and highly variable matter, with ambiguous Buddhist soteriological potentialities. As I will demonstrate, the female *shite*'s karmic constraints from her previous manifestations, usually in Heian period (794-1185) literature, and how they shifted over time, along with the Buddhist or *kami* worship role of her geographic location and its associate sacred resonances, combined with a necessity for ritual aid from a male shamanistic source, appears to play an important role in delineating her soteriological status in Zenchiku's Noh dramaturgy and possibly the *honji suijaku* worldview of Muromachi period Japan.

Approaching the Dramatic Works of Konparu Zenchiku

Several English-language studies dedicated to the Noh dramas and philosophical treatises of Zenchiku have been published in recent years, along with relevant medieval Japanese literary studies addressing the critical influence of canonical *honzetsu* on the development of Third Category plays. Of primary significance concerning the analysis of Zenchiku's plays as an individual corpus of texts is Paul S. Atkins's 2006 monograph *Revealed Identity: The Noh Plays of Konparu Zenchiku*. Structured as a detailed rhetorical analysis of Zenchiku-attributed plays in close relation to dominant medieval aesthetic and poetic theories, Atkins's research is a careful dissection of Zenchiku's plays seeking to establish a concrete system of literary analysis and overall stylistics for Zenchiku's dramatic works while also removing them from the shadow of his father-in-law, Zeami, whose plays and treatises have frequently been the primary focus of traditional scholarship in Muromachi

period Noh theater studies by Japanese and foreign academics. While Atkins's study *Revealed Identity* is primarily focused on the rhetorical dynamics of Zenchiku's dramatic compositions, Noel J Pinnington's study *Traces in the Way: Michi and the Writings of Komparu Zenchiku* (also 2006) is focused on problematizing our contemporary academic theories of the medieval concepts of *michi* (道, the way) within Muromachi period Japanese art and society,¹¹ applying it pragmatically to the case of Zenchiku's theoretical writings of *Rokurin ichirō* (六輪一露之記, Six Circles, One Dewdrop) and *Meishukushū* (明宿集, Collection Illuminating the Indwelling Deity), and importance of such writings in establishing Zenchiku's Komparu troupe as experts of the *shikisanban* (式三番) ritual featuring the *okina* (翁, felicitous old man) religious figure at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex central to religious and political life in Yamato province (大和, present day Nara prefecture.) Pinnington's methodology and analysis is exceptionally valuable in that he demonstrates how the medieval practice of *michi* was based, not on conformity, but on a more fluid process of transmission between master and student that was highly contingent on multiple contextual factors, both historical and ideological, with the case of Zeami's transmission of secret Noh performance treatises to his son-in-law Zenchiku analyzed in detail. As previously mentioned, the choice of *honzetsu* plays a critical role in the composition and analysis of Noh theater.

Janet Goff's study *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji* (1991) is an extensive study on the

¹¹ Pinnington cites Konishi Jin'ichi's monograph *Michi: Chūsei no rinen* (The Path: A Medieval Ideal) and summarizes Konishi's understanding of the practice in medieval Japan: "*michi* was believed to possess an intrinsic hierarchy—Buddhism and *waka* (courtly poetry) standing at the top. All *michi*, however, were felt to be fundamentally similar and share important characteristics... He [Konishi] writes as if *michi* were an unchanging essence to which practices within Japanese institutions or traditions at one time or other more or less approximated. He explores the statements of medieval writers to abstract the qualities of this ideal, and derives five elements: a *michi* is a *specialization*, demanding that its practitioners refrain from other arts; it needs to be *transmitted* unchanged over several generations; its practitioners must suppress their individuality, following a *conformist ethic* in training; it is expected to lead to a wisdom of *universal* value; and, being possessed of these qualities, it is accorded *authority* by society." Pinnington, *Traces in the Way*, 15-6.

medieval reception of the Heian period tale, the complex dynamics of its utilization as *honzetsu* and *honkadori* (allusive variation) within Muromachi period Noh, with analysis and annotated translations of the major *Genji*-based plays. Goff's scholarly work focuses on the critical importance of *renga* (linked verse) and *renga* handbooks as an antecedent to Noh theater, especially concerning the textual weave of associated poetic imagery that provides the drama with its meaning, and on how the *Genji* acts as a conduit through which poets and playwrights of the conflict-ridden Muromachi period could connect with an idealized image of a past Heian court embodying the medieval aesthetic of *yūgen* (幽玄, ineffable beauty).

In sum, the focus of my project is on the problematic nature of *nyonin jōbutsu* in Muromachi Noh theater as an example of larger soteriological issues within the medieval Japanese *honji suijaku* paradigm as expressed through literature, performance, and combinatory religious practice. My aim is to build upon the scholarly achievements of the above and other previous studies of Zenchiku and Noh theater to formulate an analysis that will act as a supplement to this existing academic work. I hope that my project presents context about and analysis of a representative sample of the complex nature of the female soteriological conflict within the Muromachi Noh theater as seen through the lens of Zenchiku's dramaturgy.

Chapter 1: Soteriological Conflict and Defining Female-spirit Noh Plays

Section 1: The World of Muromachi Period Noh—Zeami and His Influence on Zenchiku

The dramaturgy of Noh is deeply rooted in the expression of an image of a character. Often ghostly and appearing in a dream, the slow unwrapping of the character's identity and attachments play an integral role in what has come to be known as *mugen* Noh, frequently translated as “dream vision” Noh. As mentioned above, the development of this style of drama is largely credited to the work of Muromachi period actor and playwright Zeami Motokiyo. Wishing to raise Yamato *sarugaku* to a higher artistic level, Zeami wrote multiple secret treatises on his hereditary art to raise its appeal to an elite audience beyond the boundaries of the art form's native province of Yamato through focus on an increased artistic beauty in textual composition and performance. Zeami's father Kan'ami (観阿弥, 1333-1384) was also an important actor and playwright in Yamato *sarugaku* and had gained the favor of the Ashikaga shogunate in Kyōto in 1374, introducing his then adolescent son to the man who would become his most important patron, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (足利義満, 1358-1408).¹² Originally meant for secret transmission to his oldest son Motomasa (元雅, ?-1432) and later passed on to his son-in-law Zenchiku, these treatises represent Zeami's intellectual inheritance as *tayū* (大夫), hereditary head, of the Yūzaki-za (結崎座, later Kanze-ryū).¹³ The fact that Zenchiku became the inheritor of secret knowledge across clan lines not only

¹² Hare, *Zeami's Style*, 16.

¹³ Collectively called the Yamato *sarugaku yoza* (大和猿楽四座, Four Troupes of Yamato *Sarugaku*), the other three troupes were the Tobi-za (外山座), Sakado-za (坂戸), and Enmaiza (円満井), who would later evolve into the Hōshō-ryū (宝生流), Kongō-ryū (金剛流), and Konparu-ryū (金春流). Omote and Amano, *Nōgaku no rekishi*, 38-9. The current *ryū* (school) names were used in the Muromachi period to refer to troupes (and specifically to their *tayū*) and are utilized in this study for simplicity's sake, rather than alternating with the older *sarugaku-za* titles.

displays the great bond between the men but also demonstrates a direct line of transmission of Zeami's intellectual influence to Zenchiku. Zenchiku was *tayū* of the Enman'i-za (円満井座, later Konparu-ryū), and was based at the powerful Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex in Nara City, while Zeami had been attached to the Ashikaga shogunate in Kyōto City. However, the complex nature of the two men's relationship and Zeami's transmission of his secret writings reflects a changing political environment. While Zeami had prospered in the capital during the golden age of Yoshimitsu and continued to thrive under his successor Yoshimochi (義持, 1386-1428), the situation changed under Yoshinori (義教, 1394-1441), the fourth Ashikaga shogun. As will be examined in greater detail in chapter 3, Yoshinori was well known for his disruptive, micromanaging style of governance, especially in matters of hereditary entitlements and succession. The shogun personally endorsed his favored actor On'ami (音阿弥, 1398-1467), Zeami's nephew, as *tayū* of the Kanze troupe in direct violation of Zeami's personal wishes. Noh scholar Thomas Hare postulates that this conflict over the matter of succession to the position of Kanze *tayū* between ruler-patron and artist-subject contributed to Zeami's exile to Sado Island (佐渡島) in 1443, although Zeami's exact reason for exile remains unknown.¹⁴

Zenchiku's relationship with Zeami has been the subject of a large volume of scholarship. As noted above, Zenchiku was Zeami's son-in-law and close with the Kanze *tayū*, providing financial aid for both Zeami and wife during the former's exile on Sado.¹⁵ Zeami's oldest son, Motomasa, is generally considered by scholars to have been Zeami's hand-picked artistic successor and heir to the position of Kanze *tayū*, but died in 1432 at Ise under mysterious circumstances, possibly due to his involvement with political supporters of

¹⁴ Hare, *Zeami's Style*, 35-7.

¹⁵ Atkins, *Revealed Identity*, 8-9.

remaining factions of the Southern Court at Yoshino, who opposed Ashikaga rule in Kyōto.¹⁶ Further complicating matters, Zeami's younger son Motoyoshi (元義) had become a Buddhist monk, making him ineligible for the position as Kanze head. Even though he was of another Yamato *sarugaku-za*, Zenchiku became the seventy-year old Zeami's choice as recipient of his secret writings, rather than allowing them to pass on to his rival On'ami.¹⁷ The nature of transmission, adaptation, and influence of the older Kanze *tayū*'s theoretical writings on his son-in-law, who had received these works, is the subject of divergent opinion. Hare generally faults Zenchiku for being a poor student of his father-in-law via analysis of several Third Category plays featuring female-spirits,¹⁸ stating that they have not followed the rules laid down by several of Zeami's key treatises. Hare argues Zenchiku's main mistakes are errors of composition, namely: improper utilization of *honzetsu*, unsatisfactory wordplay in creating poetic imagery, overly vague allusive *waka* selections, and poor ordering of plot sequences.¹⁹ In contrast, Paul Atkins has a more positive view and proposes a narrative of the two men in a mutually beneficial teacher-student relationship with Zenchiku as the direct artistic successor of Zeami:

Thanks to this arrangement [Zenchiku marrying his daughter] Zeami gained a protégé who would put his teachings to use on the stage, perform the plays he had written and revised, preserve his theoretical texts for future generations, and pass on an understanding of Zeami as a performer and teacher.²⁰

¹⁶ The political conflict with Imperial succession was caused by Emperor Go-Daigo's (後醍醐, 1228-1339, r. 1318-1339) attempt to rule directly; this attempt was first thwarted by the Kamakura shogunate and then Ashikaga Takauji (足利尊氏, 1305-1358.) During this period, there were two Imperial courts: a Northern court in Kyōto supported by the Ashikaga military government and a Southern court comprised of Go-Daigo and his descendants supported by his allies in Yoshino, Yamato province. For detailed information on Go-Daigo in English, please refer to Goble. *Kenmu: Go-Daigo's Revolution*.

¹⁷ Hare, *Zeami's Style*, 33; Atkins, *Revealed Identity*, 8.

¹⁸ The works in question are *Bashō* (芭蕉, The Banana-Leaf Plant), *Teika* (定家), *Yōkihi*, *Tamakazura*, and *Nonomiya*. Hare, *Zeami's Style*, 177-82. More plays have been positively attributed to Zenchiku following the original publication of Hare's study in 1986.

¹⁹ Hare, *Zeami's Style*, 179-82.

²⁰ Atkins, *Revealed Identity*, 8.

Atkins views Zenchiku as an independent figure with his own unique artistic and aesthetic sensibility who was “free to build upon the massive legacy of Zeami.”²¹

It is critical to remember that the role of the *tayū* was to preserve his familial lineage and that he was also personally responsible for the survival of the members of the *sarugaku* troupe. The art form of *sarugaku* developed in an environment of fierce competition, due to the high concentration of *sarugaku* performers in the mid-fifteenth century. *Sarugaku-za* were active not only in Yamato but also in the nearby provinces of Ōmi (近江, present day Shiga prefecture), Tanba (丹波, occupying areas of present day central Kyōto prefecture and eastern Hyōgo prefecture), Setsu (摂津, occupying areas of present northern Ōsaka prefecture and southern Hyōgo), and Yamashiro (山城, southern Kyōto.)²² Like their Yamato counterparts, these troupes were actively engaged in seeking patronage from regionally powerful Buddhist temples and *kami* worship shrines, with their primary function in the early Muromachi period being specialization in the *okina sarugaku* (翁猿楽) ritual.²³ As all five provinces were in close proximity to one another, troupes vied for patronage from local institutions and more prestigious power brokers, who frequently utilized ritual performance for spiritual and political purposes. Additionally, *sarugaku-za* were in direct competition with *dengaku* (田楽, field music) groups, a form of medieval Japanese performance that was also popular with the Ashikaga shogunate in Kyōto.²⁴ By Zenchiku’s lifetime, patronage had become less fluid, based less on competitive performance and more on hereditary appointments.²⁵ In addition, due to the volatile state of politics and social order, strengthening one’s patronage situation would have been a high priority.

²¹ Atkins, *Revealed Identity*, 236.

²² Omote and Amano, *Nōgaku no rekishi*, 31.

²³ Omote and Amano, *Nōgaku no rekishi*, 31-2.

²⁴ Omote and Amano, *Nōgaku no rekishi*, 32.

²⁵ Pinnington, *Traces in the Way*, 11.

Noel Pinnington's evaluation of the frequently debated nature of Zeami's influence on Zenchiku places special focus on the Konparu *tayū*'s awareness of survival in the political landscape of the time-period. As stated above, Pinnington's analytical methodology examines the concept of *michi* within medieval Japanese art and society, applying it pragmatically to the case of Zenchiku's theoretical writings (*Rokurin ichirō* and *Meishukushū*), tracking the potential historical context and process that engendered their creation. He places special emphasis on the process of transmission within the application of *michi* and how modern academic conceptions probably differed from practical applications in Muromachi period arts. Pinnington's conclusion not only illuminates the relationship between Zeami and Zenchiku but may also shed important light on factors helpful for untangling the soteriological puzzles involving female-spirits in the latter playwright's dramatic works. Pinnington writes,

In general, the management of succession has been markedly problematic in Japanese history. In the early Muromachi succession disputes were endemic in office-bearing families of many types, from the imperial family, to military officers, to poetic specialists. The case of Zeami's transmission to the next generation, taking place within an unstable patronage environment [Zeami's own], is exemplary of the tensions inherent in artistic successions... In Zeami's case, the demands of office and of art proved irrevocable. He therefore finally sought to transmit his knowledge independently of the transfer of power in his house, of which he had lost control. This placed the recipient, Zenchiku, in an invidious position, for his access to patronage derived from his own family, were as his "secret" knowledge came from Zeami. Contrary to commonly asserted views, Zenchiku maintained his commitment to his own house and its traditions rather than Zeami's house, with which there were significant matters of contention. An understanding of these conflicts is all-important in understanding Zenchiku's problematic reading of Zeami's works.²⁶

While the main thrust of Pinnington's overall study focuses on an analysis of Zenchiku's treatises and their role in legitimizing the Konparu, and thus himself, as experts in the *shikisanban* ritual to solidify his patronage situation at the Kōfuku-ji complex, the above passage is highly illuminating to this current discussion for multiple reasons. Pinnington illustrates that Zenchiku's interpretation of Zeami's theories was predicated on his own

²⁶ Pinnington, *Traces in the Way*, 26.

socio-historic context as *tayū* of the Konparu troupe and that he applied these theories to suit his own unique artistic and professional interests, rather than to preserve Zeami's intellectual or artistic heritage. This is useful to the analysis of the soteriological status of female-spirits in several ways. While Zenchiku did not write specifically about the feminine in his treatises *Rokurin ichirō* or *Meishukushū*, Zeami wrote extensively about the composition of female dramatic archetypes, most notably in his mid-career treatise *Sandō* (三道), which delineates how to compose plays featuring female-spirits as main characters. It is therefore possible to examine *Sandō* as a template for the composition of *mugen* female-spirit Noh and extrapolate the influence of this and other Zeami compositional theories on Zenchiku's dramaturgic approach to female-spirits.

Section 2: Forming the Female-spirit Archetype- Zeami's *Sandō* and the Influence of *Renga*

With the importance and nature of Zeami's influence in Zenchiku's works delineated, let us consider the Kanze *tayū*'s mid-career work, *Sandō*.²⁷ This work addresses theoretical ideals regarding compositional strategies and aesthetic principles for the creation of successful Noh plays, especially Third Category plays featuring the *shite* as female-spirits. *Sandō* is therefore of special interest in that it gives guidelines for defining the female-spirit via *honzetsu*, and therefore helps us trace the soteriological elements of these personas. *Sandō*'s methodology is to outline acceptable sources for *honzetsu*, along with their performance strategies, each with their distinct archetypes derived from the literary or

²⁷ The annotated translation of *Sandō* from Appendix 1 of Quinn's *Developing Zeami* (291-302) was used for this study.

performance canons.²⁸ Furthermore, according to Shelley Fenno Quinn, this treatise clearly and concisely,

sets down the ground rules for a dramatic model that has come to be labeled in modern times as *mugen nō* (dream noh/ phantasmal noh). Plays that follow the *mugen* format typically feature a protagonist (*shite*) who is a supernatural being and who appears initially in the first act with his or her true-identity disguised. He or she will begin to tell a story to the listener, the supporting actor (*waki*), from an ostensibly detached stance. However, as the story unfolds that distance begins to dissolve. The *waki*'s curiosity begins to be redirected from the contents of the narrative to the identity of the narrator. In a two-act play, the *shite* will exit between acts and then return in his or her true-identity. In the second act the *shite* participates unreservedly in reenacting the salient points of the story. Some plays in this group have the *shite* of the second act appear in the *waki*'s dream, which is one justification for this modern classification of "dream" noh. The classification has in turn influenced how many scholars of noh have chosen to organize their ideas.²⁹

The above analysis of the general *mugen* plot structure found within *Sandō* is a useful guideline in assessing Zenchiku's Third Category plays, as they tend to fall into the phantasmagorical category of "dream visions." By the time *Sandō* was composed, Zeami had narrowed down the field of the Zeami troupe's potential styles to what he termed *santai* (三体, Three Styles): the aged man, the feminine style, and the martial style.³⁰ It is the selection of the feminine style (女体, *nyotai*) example that applies to the current analysis of Zenchiku's female-spirit plays. Zeami writes,

Write in such a way as to embellish its style. Dance and chant are fundamental to this style of performance in particular. Within it, there should be a very elemental style of personage. For the gentlewoman, whether a junior consort, an imperial concubine, Lady Aoi, Yūgao, or Ukifune, be mindful of the noble image, the uncommon aristocratic presence and appearance, when you write. Accordingly,

²⁸ That literary canon being Chinese, Japanese, or Buddhist. The performance canon being that of *sarugaku*.

²⁹ Quinn, *Developing Zeami*, 13.

³⁰ Quinn, *Developing Zeami*, 393. Zeami also mentions two sub-styles, that of the *hōka* performer (放下) and the demon. Both utilize the mimic style of *saidō* (細動), meaning "pulverized/ broken-down movement." Demon Noh was very popular in Zeami's time and one of the specialties of the Yamato *sarugaku* troupe that he inherited from his father Kan'ami.

pay careful heed to the vocal music and fine *kakari*³¹ music, for they must not resemble those of professional *kusemai*³² entertainers or the like...

Within material in this style that is to have this kind of personage, it is possible on occasion to discover something akin to a gem among gems. A rare find indeed is material of the *yūgen* flower which, beyond the exquisite visual affect of the gentlewoman's person, bears such visual affect as Lady Rokujō casting her curse on Lady Aoi, Yūgao succumbing to the evil spirit, and Ukifune possessed.³³

Here Zeami singles out three of the classic heroines from Murasaki Shikibu's (紫式部) mid-Heian masterwork *Genji monogatari* as archetypal examples of the feminine persona in Noh. He is referring to three older plays: *Aoi no Ue* (葵上, Lady Aoi, featuring Rokujō as the *shite*), *Yūgao* (夕顔, Evening Faces), and *Ukifune* (浮舟, The Drifting Boat). This demonstrates that *Genji*-derived *honzetsu* were already established in Zeami's lifetime as strong sources for performative influence and representations of feminine beauty. All of Zenchiku's Third Category plays featuring female-spirits analyzed in this study (*Yōkihi*, *Tamakazura*, and *Nonomiya*) feature *shite* either directly from *Genji monogatari* (the title character of *Tamakazura* and Lady Rokujō of *Nonomiya*) or who are highly textually associated with the tale (Yang Guifei of *Yōkihi*). Furthermore, Pinnington's assessment of Zenchiku's "misreading" of Zeami's aesthetic and performative styles and structures may also be applied to this above passage detailing selection of *honzetsu* for female persona. This passage from *Sandō* emphasizes the importance of spirit possession (物の怪, *mononoke*) as a

³¹ Quinn defines *kakari* for Zeami as being "artistic effect," describing it as a multifaceted performative concept for realizing *yūgen* on stage via dance, chant, and instrumental music. Quinn, *Developing Zeami*, 49-54.

³² A medieval performance form derived from a similar art called *shirabyōshi* (白拍子). *Kusemai* (曲舞) performers were originally both male and female, by the fifteenth century they were primarily women. The performance structure featured short and long dance pieces divided into two parts, the second part featuring an accelerating rhythmic structure. Performers sang on Buddhist subject matter during their dances. *Kusemai* performers occupied low social status and frequently worked as prostitutes. Kan'ami is credited with introducing the *kusemai* into Noh and Zeami with refining it, utilizing its vocal style in the creation of the *kuse* (クセ) passage as the narrative and emotional heart of the drama. Ortolani. *Japanese Theatre*, 75-7.

³³ Quinn, *Developing Zeami*, 295-96.

site of dramatic beauty and tension. However, none of Zenchiku's attributed female-spirit plays feature the overt spirit possession sequences found in plays such as *Aoi no Ue*, *Yūgao*, or *Ukifune*.³⁴ What binds the characters of the original *Genji*, as does their counterparts in the later Muromachi period Noh plays, is that they all directly suffer from *mononoke*, which either forms the center of the dramaturgic action of the play or defines the character. In the case of Zenchiku's three female-spirit plays, which may also be classified as *Genji* plays, there is no such overt dramatic action such as *mononoke* binding the works together. In the case of *Yōkihi*, *Tamakazura*, and *Nonomiya* the shifting soteriological statuses of the female-spirit *shite* act as the identifying dramatic element in Zenchiku's dramaturgy. Nevertheless, the delineation of female persona within *Sandō* clearly demonstrates the *mugen* Noh propensity for the aristocratic, suffering feminine persona as the highest manifestation of *yūgen*, one of the central elements of Zenchiku's dramaturgy in Third Category plays featuring female-spirits.

As mentioned above, *yūgen*, or ineffable beauty, was a key aesthetic principle of the medieval era and the Muromachi period. *Genji monogatari*'s status as the literary exemplar of *yūgen* was established through the medieval art form of linked-verse poetry, *renga*. In drawing upon well-known works of verse and prose, *renga* was able to take on a level of artistry that belied its origins as a contest of skill among poets, to become the preeminent poetic art of the Muromachi period.³⁵ As defined by aristocratic statesman and influential

³⁴ In chapter 4, the play *Tamakazura*'s structural basis on the play *Ukifune* will be discussed. However, the *shite* of *Tamakazura* does not suffer from *mononoke* as does her counterpart in *Ukifune*.

³⁵ Structurally speaking a verse of *renga* was not radically different from that of the standard *waka*. Both are in the structure of 5-7-5-7-7: the three lines of the upper phrase, *kami no ku* (上の句), are five syllables, followed by seven syllables, and then completed with another set of five. The lower phrase, *shimo no ku* (下の句), consists of two lines of seven each. It is from its construction that *renga* derives its name of "linked verse." One poet would compose the *kami no ku* while a second would complete the poem with the *shimo no ku*. It was the complex rules for linkage and poetic association between the upper and lower *ku* that made *renga* a match of skill among literati.

renga poet Nijō Yoshimoto (二条良基, 1320-1388), the *yūgen*-effect in *renga* at its most basic level lies in the creation of an elegantly modulated stream of verse that will appeal to the listener's ear.³⁶ Yoshitomo was an early poetry tutor of Zeami and a highly influential figure for the development of *renga* and Noh. In addition to the flow of words within the linking of verses, *yūgen* also refers to images of beauty and elegance within the verse itself. Yoshimoto wrote several treatises on *renga* composition, and appears to have had a profound effect on Zeami when he was young and in attendance on Yoshimitsu. *Renga* frequently uses allusions to and parts of already established verse and prose as a means of composition and linkage. The use of poetic allusion gives depth and poetic weight to the linked verse, creating a brocade of imagery. The poetic weave of *renga* and its associated techniques came to form much of the textual and poetic structure of Noh textual creation.

Another important element in the development of *yūgen* was the utilization of *honzetsu*. By Yoshimoto's time, a classical Japanese literary canon had been formed with specific works deemed superior sources of allusion for poetic composition. Poetry anthologies such as the Nara period *Manyōshū* (万葉集) and the early Heian *Kokinwakashū* (古今和歌集) were frequent sources of allusion and inspiration for *renga* poets, as was the Heian collection of prose and poetry *Ise monogatari* (伊勢物語, The Tale of Ise). Yoshimoto often wrote extolling the superiority of one text over all others as a source of *yūgen* imagery: *Genji monogatari*.³⁷

Yoshitomo was not the first poet to espouse the merits of Murasaki Shikibu's text. Fujiwara no Shunzei (藤原俊成, 1114-1204), one of the outstanding poets of his age, stated that a poet who did not know Shikibu's work was basically worthless. His son Teika (藤原定家, 1162-1241), Zenchiku's favorite poet, was a scholar of *Genji monogatari*, his

³⁶ Quinn, *Developing Zeami*, 91.

³⁷ Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 18-21.

Aobyōshibon (青表紙本) recension of the text becoming the established version of the work.³⁸ Yoshitomo gave the *Genji* high praise for its *yūgen*-imbued language and his grandson Ichijō Kanera (一条兼良, 1402-1481), also a high ranking aristocratic statesman and *renga* poet with whom Zenchiku would form a close association, wrote treatises on the Heian period work.³⁹ However, by the Muromachi period the language of *Genji* had become increasingly remote to all but specialists of the text, and by the time of Zenchiku, knowledge of *Genji monogatari* tended to be based not on the original text itself, but on *renga* handbooks as well as plot digests and summaries dedicated to the Murasaki's tale.⁴⁰ As the popularity of linked verse spread outside of the upper echelons of society more and more people sought knowledge of the poetic tradition necessary to compose proper *renga*; plot digests and *renga* linking manuals often supplied such knowledge. For example, *Genji monogatari* digests were often used as *honzetsu* for plays dealing with the world of the tale rather than the actual text of tale itself. This was true for Zenchiku as well. Works such as the *Genji kokagami* (源氏小鏡, The Small Mirror of Genji) and *Hikaru Genji ichibu uta* (光源氏一部歌, A Group of Poems of the Shining Genji) contained short plot summaries of the tale's chapters, with each chapter's most famous poems included after the summary, along with brief commentaries explaining the work.⁴¹ Such works would have been ideal for *renga* poets and Noh playwrights, who primarily needed a general idea of a chapter's setting, its characters, and important poems with which to create a dense weave of allusive poetic text.⁴²

³⁸ Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 16.

³⁹ Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 18-9.

⁴⁰ Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 14-29.

⁴¹ Handbooks such as *Genji ōkagami* and *Genji monogatari teiyō* contained more detailed plot summaries and every poem found in the tale. The emphasis in these latter works was on the tale itself rather than its use as source material for poetic composition. It is likely that the simpler handbooks were more useful for the composition of *renga* and Noh. Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 27-8.

⁴² Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 27-8.

Through comparative analysis with the feminine style as outlined in Zeami's *Sandō*, the poetics of *yūgen* in *renga*, and female-spirit plays' direct relations to the highly charged *honzetsu* of the female figures in *Genji monogatari*, the background material within the world of Muromachi period Noh theater for Zenchiku's female-spirit plays becomes clearer. Next, by contrasting female-spirit plays within the context of the other five categories of Noh, the direct soteriological conflict intrinsic to Zenchiku's works in the genre will be explicated.

Section 3: Defining the Female-spirit Form in Third Category Plays—Soteriological Status and The Criticality of *Nyonin jōbutsu*

By the Muromachi period, the classification of Noh plays into five groups appears to have been well established. These classifications remain today and are still in use by contemporary Noh performers and scholars to designate plays. In the medieval period, a day's performance would have consisted of plays in the First through the Fifth Categories, with a *kyōgen* (狂言, satirical piece) in between each. First Category plays are called *Waki* or *Kami Noh* (脇能, 神能) and feature Buddhist deities or *kami* in the title role. Zeami's *Takasago* (高砂) and Zenchiku's *Kamo* (加茂) are considered exemplars of this style. They are felicitous in nature and frequently praise a certain deity and its associated temple or shrine. The Second Category comprises *Shura mono*, Warrior Noh. Rich in soteriological content, these plays feature warriors who have died in battle and are trapped in the realm of *Ashura* (阿修羅, Titans), constantly reenacting their last battle and death over and over. Title characters are often tragic figures from the Genpei Wars (1180-1185), with the Zeami-composed *Atsumori* (敦盛) and *Tadanori* (忠度) being prime examples. Third Category plays are *Katsura mono*, which directly translates to "wig pieces" and features female personas, most frequently female-spirits. The variations within this field and their metaphysical content, especially relating to Zenchiku, will be discussed below. The Fourth Category has no special

name, only its direct Japanese translation of *Yonbanme mono* (四番目物), “Fourth Category Pieces.” Plays in the Fourth Category either defy simple classification or are considered *genzai mono* (現在能, *genzai Noh*): dramas with plot structures that happen in real time, contrary to the *mugen* plot structure detailed above. *Genzai Noh* frequently have more concrete, plot-driven structures, with cause-and-effect dramatic plotting. One famous examples from this category is Motomasa’s *Sumidagawa* (隅田川, Sumida River), which illustrates the plight of a mother driven to madness while searching for her missing child. The persona of the mad woman is a frequent topic of Forth Category plays. However, these mad women are alive and occupy the human realm, thus preventing them from falling under the Third Category. Finally, Fifth Category or *Kiri Noh* (切能, Final or Ending Noh) feature *shite* of a demonic nature, both male and female. Kan’ami’s *Aoi no Ue* and *Dōjōji* (道成寺, Dōjō Temple, author unknown) are classics of this category.⁴³

As can be seen from this listing, supernatural or spiritual manifestations appear frequently as main dramatic persona in Noh theater. Paul Atkins, for example, in examining Zenchiku’s plays and commenting on their religious content, writes,

What I labeled “revealed identity” in the Introduction contains two overlapping concepts. First is the repeated movement towards non-dualism, which may be observed more readily in Zenchiku’s treatises but also exerts significant influence upon the plays. It includes such preexisting concepts as *honji suijaku*, *sōmoku jōbutsu*,⁴⁴ *nyonin jōbutsu*, and *shohō jissō*.⁴⁵ To that we might add Zenchiku’s

⁴³ Ortolani, *Japanese Theatre*, 132-33.

⁴⁴ *Sōmoku jōbutsu* (草木成仏), enlightenment for plants. The Buddhological concept that plants, and by extension all inanimate objects, possess the buddha nature and can achieve enlightenment. The concept developed in China during the Tang Dynasty (唐代, 618-907) in the Tiantai (天台, J. Tendai), Huayan (華嚴, J. Kegon), and Chan (禪, J. Zen) schools of Buddhism. In Japan, belief in *sōmoku jōbutsu* was promoted by the animism elements within the *honji suijaku* paradigm that dominated the country’s religious worldview, becoming a major element in the *hongaku* concepts of Tendai Buddhism. Nakamura, *et al.*, *Iwanami Bukkyō jiten*, 519. The textual source for *sōmoku jōbutsu* is the “Medicinal Herbs” chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* (chapter 5, scroll 3). Hurvitz, *Lotus Sutra*, 95-110. For a fuller discussion in English on the gender concept in Tendai and Shingon Buddhism and its ideological utilization in medieval Japan, please refer to Rambelli’s *Vegetal Buddhas* and *Buddhist*

insistence on the unity of noh and waka and his work on the *okina* presence in *Meishukushū*. With regard to the plays per se, one thinks of Shokushi's return to the suffocating embrace of the Teika spirit [in the play *Teika*] which suggests the doctrine that *nirvana* and *samsara* are one and the same. Such assertions were typical of medieval thinkers and artists, but Zenchiku pursues them to their limits, rather than rendering mere lip service.

The second concept comprising revealed identity is what I have termed Zenchiku's theater of revelation, to be contrasted with Zeami's theater of transformation. It may be regarded as the manifestation of the philosophical framework delineated above via the medium of noh drama. The central aspect of the theater of revelation is perhaps the trajectory of the *shite*'s spiritual development over the course of the play.⁴⁶

This concept of the *shite*'s spiritual development along with several key Buddhological concepts identified by Atkins in this passage is illuminating for considering the role of soteriology in Zenchiku's works. I would like to adapt Atkin's term of "spiritual development" into the more metaphysically specific term of "soteriological status," which addresses the ontological status and soteriological potentiality that each *shite* within a Zenchiku play occupies regarding their path toward realizing Buddhist enlightenment. This soteriological status is not only the primary dramaturgic force within Zenchiku's Third Category plays, but is a motivating dramatic factor for those plays featuring female-spirits.

It is necessary to clarify that not all Third Category Noh plays, or *Katsura mono* (wig pieces), in fact feature human female-spirits. While the category does focus on *shite* that are otherworldly characters existing outside of normal human understanding of space and time, with plots following the standard *mugen* structure, some apparently human females turn out to be the manifestation of the spirits of plants in human form. We can therefore divide the plays into two categories according to their soteriological status: *nyonin jōbutsu* (enlightenment of women) and *sōmoku jōbutsu* (enlightenment of plants). Categorizing *shite*

Materiality. Please refer to chapter 2 for analysis of the *honji suijaku* paradigm in the medieval religious worldview and the Buddhological concept of *hongaku*.

⁴⁵ *Shohō jissō* (諸法実相), all things in their true form. The Buddhological concept of viewing the world with perfection of wisdom (般若波羅蜜, *hannya harumitsu*), which in turn is realization of the ultimate void (畢竟空, *hitsuyōkū*). Nakamura, *et al.*, *Iwanami Bukkyō jiten*, 454.

⁴⁶ Atkins, *Revealed Identity*, 236-37.

ontologically according to the means of achieving enlightenment is useful, as the intrinsic dramatic conflict in most Third Category plays is the female *shite*'s soteriological status: the fact that her spirit has returned to the location of her greatest emotional attachment and cannot (or will not) transmigrate. Also, the methodology for enlightenment between women and plants, as outlined by the *Lotus Sutra* and manifested in most Third Category plays, is fundamentally different.⁴⁷ What defines a work as a female-spirit play, versus a plant spirit⁴⁸ or hybrid spirit⁴⁹ work, includes the following elements:

1. The *shite*'s ontological status is purely that of a human female in her former life. She cannot be a plant, animal, Buddhist deity, or *kami* that has taken the form of a human woman. She also cannot be a human woman that has turned into a demon or a demon disguising its form as a woman.
2. She is trapped in a liminal state in the cycle of reincarnation due to suffering from a female-gendered karmic sin (such as unrequited love/longing, sexual lust, etc.). Thus, her soteriological status is a state of suffering; this suffering is central to her existence.
3. The female-spirits frequently manifest at a *specific* geographical location due to karmic bond. This location is critical to both her previous life and current suffering from karmic attachment, and is usually correlated with the primary *honzetsu* of the play. There is frequently a related soteriological status to this location.

⁴⁷ In Zenchiku's *Teika*, the female-spirit of Princess Shokushi (式子内親王) is karmically and thus ontologically linked with the male-plant spirit of Fujiwara no Teika, making this a hybrid play. As she is linked with the Teika-plant spirit, the Buddhist monk reads from the "Medicinal Herbs" chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* to attempt to bring about her enlightenment. Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*chū*), 350-1.

⁴⁸ For example, Zenchiku's *Kakitsubata* (杜若, The Iris) featuring the spirit of an iris or his *Bashō*, featuring a banana-leaf plant. For discussion of the problem of *sōmoku jōbutsu* in Zenchiku's and other Noh plays, please refer to Klein, "Buddhahood for the Nonsentient Reconsidered", 222-43.

⁴⁹ See Footnote 36 for definition of *Teika* as a hybrid female-spirit-plant spirit play.

4. The spirit follows *mugen* Noh convention of appearing to the *waki* in the first act of the play as a “woman of the place” (a local villager, etc.) and then reappearing in the second act in her true form. Before the key moment of revelation, she is likely to hint at her true-identity during the *kuse* passage.
5. In some cases (for example, Zeami’s *Matsukaze* [松風, Pining Wind] and *Izutsu* [井筒, The Well Cradle]) during the final dance of the play, the female-spirit becomes so deluded by karmic attachment that she will put on the *kariginu* (狩衣, hunting robe) and court cap of her love object and dance as though she were him. This sequence in the play is to highlight the intense passion, tinged with sorrowful madness, of the spirit.
6. Female characters who appear as spirits in Noh are almost always taken from the canon of classical Japanese literature, with Heian sources being especially preferred (*Genji monogatari*, *Ise monogatari*.) As will be seen from Zenchiku’s plays, he expanded the source material to include Chinese sources, a rarity in female-spirit plays.

As seen by the above guidelines, the soteriological status (ontological and spiritual potentiality for enlightenment) of the *shite* is central to the dramaturgy of female-spirit plays. The soteriological status of the *shite* featured in Zenchiku’s female-spirit plays gravitates toward the spectrum of ambiguity and ambivalence, placing further emphasis on their ontological and spiritual elements as sites of dramatic conflict. To properly assess this dramatic conflict at the heart of Zenchiku’s female-spirit plays, a clearer understanding of the religious background of medieval Japan and socio-political conditions for women in that time is necessary. Chapter 2 is devoted to analyzing these and other pertinent issues relating to female soteriology and ontology within the medieval Japanese worldview.

Conclusion

With universal salvation acting as one of the guiding principles of Mahāyāna Buddhism, variations or abnormalities within this concept deserve critical and academic examination. The problematic nature of enlightenment for women, *nyonin jōbutsu*, as described by the highly influential Mahāyāna text the *Lotus Sutra*, raises multiple ontological and soteriological questions. As I have discussed in this chapter, the genre of Japanese Muromachi period *mugen* Noh drama, in particular Third Category plays featuring female-spirits, provides multifaceted examples of ambivalent or conflicted representations of female enlightenment. These examples are especially pronounced in the works of playwright-actor Konparu Zenchiku, with many female-spirit works attributed to him. As noted above, to fully analyze Zenchiku's dramatic works focused on this female soteriological conflict, in this study I will employ a three-part methodology. First, I will delineate the multiple *honzetsu* (source texts) utilized for their composition, with special focus on assessing the importance of sacred space and geographic location, Second, I will explicate the role of *honkadori* (poetic allusion) in creating a dense weave of associative imagery, vital in constructing multilayered meanings within the play. Third, I will examine the centrality of religious language used in the Noh, particularly allegoresis, a primary mode of discourse in medieval Japanese religiosity. This interdisciplinary methodology will allow me to place Zenchiku's works back into their original historic and religious context, with the ultimate goal of developing and comprehending the soteriological status of each work's *shite*, that is, her ontological and soteriological potentiality for Buddhist enlightenment. Additional factors that play an important role include Zeami's conception of the feminine style and Zenchiku's interpretation of it, as well as the overall centrality of Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji monogatari* as *honzetsu* for Noh play composition, as it was considered an exemplar of *yūgen* by the medieval Japanese literary world. Finally, I have defined female-spirit plays, the object of

this study, within the Third Category by the ontological and soteriological status of their *shite*, as a female-spirit of purely human origin, and not the spirit of a plant or a hybrid spiritual entity. Zenchiku, in fact, wrote plays featuring all three types of spiritual manifestation, therefore necessitating careful demarcation of the *shite*'s ontological and soteriological nature. Because plant spirits and hybrid spirits require different soteriological processes to necessitate their enlightenment than female-spirits they will be left for another study.

Chapter 2: Combinatory Religious Systems and Their Influence on Female-spirit Noh

Introduction

A clear and concise understanding of the religious environment of Muromachi period Japan is essential to the analysis of Konparu Zenchiku's Third Category Noh plays featuring female-spirits involved in soteriological conflicts. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the major systems of religious thought impacting perceptions of soteriology within medieval Japan, as well as addressing pressing socio-political concerns for women within that era. As the most important Mahāyāna Buddhist text to consider when discussing female soteriology is the "Devadatta" chapter (提婆達多, J. *Daibadatta*, Ch. 12, scroll 5) from the *Lotus Sutra*, this chapter will begin with an analysis of the rhetorical construction of this chapter and its key figure, the Dragon (Naga) Princess, along with an introduction of the theoretical concept of the *Abject*. The *honji suijaku* paradigm, the dominant mode of religious discourse throughout medieval Japan, will be assessed along with several of its key concepts as they relate to the topic of female soteriology. The medieval era in Japan was a time of great intellectual development in Buddhological concepts regarding enlightenment and the potentiality for its realization within one's lifetime. One of the most central of these was the Tendai sect-based concept of *hongaku* (本覺, original enlightenment), which had a profound influence on multiple levels of *honji suijaku* religious conceptions of reality, enlightenment, and the fundamental nature of existence. These religious thought systems and their impact on the soteriological potentiality for women were directly affected by multiple socio-historic developments during the medieval era, especially concerning their shifting political and economic agency. Finally, these divergent components of religious worldview and female social agency can be seen to combine in medieval literary representations of the ninth-century poet Ono no Komachi. I will argue that the gender-based karmic suffering and biographic

malleability of this medieval Komachi figure serves as a prototype for the female-spirit personas that occupy the works of Zenchiku.

Section 1: The *Lotus Sutra* as a Source for Female Soteriology, Abjection, and Spiritual Obstruction

As mentioned in chapter 1, the soteriological potential for women to achieve enlightenment, *nyonin jōbutsu*, had been a subject of controversy in Buddhist theological history since the religion's origins in India. The *Lotus Sutra*,⁵⁰ specifically the *Devadatta* chapter, is cited as the main source for the concept.⁵¹ However, multiple paradoxes and contentions are presented in this chapter that problematize enlightenment for women as impossible due to the abject nature of women. The first of these is the rhetorical construction of the chapter itself: Buddha tells the assembled collection of his disciples and gathered bodhisattvas about his wicked cousin Devadatta. Although a family member, Devadatta has attempted to both kill the Buddha and cause a fracture within the Buddhist monastic community (僧伽, Sk. *saṃgha*, J. *sōgya*).⁵² Despite this, the Buddha insists that even someone that evil will surely attain enlightenment upon hearing the *Lotus Sutra*.

The story of Devadatta demonstrates the great soteriological power the document holds: even someone who attempts to commit the greatest sins (causing the death of the Buddha and destruction of the Buddhist monastic community), can be saved by the teachings of the sutra. The chapter then goes on to discuss the enlightenment of the daughter of the Dragon (Naga) King through her hearing of the sutra. Unlike Devadatta, who is wicked, the adolescent Dragon Princess is brilliant in mind and pure of heart. She presents the Buddha with a jewel representing her purity, instantaneously changes from her serpentine female

⁵⁰ Buswell and Lopez, *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 729.

⁵¹ Hurvitz, *Lotus Sutra*, 179-185.

⁵² Buswell and Lopez, *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 750.

form into a human male, and attains enlightenment within this lifetime.⁵³ In his treatise *Meishukushū*, Konparu Zenchiku emphasized the chapter as central in importance to the overall meaning of the *Lotus Sutra*. Within Susan Blakeley Klein's research on the methodology of etymological allegoresis, a dominant methodology within the intellectual discourse of the Muromachi period, she has demonstrated how Zenchiku utilizes paronomasia (the analysis of multilayered puns)⁵⁴ to analyze the individual radicals of the characters (漢字, *kanji*) that comprise the Japanese name (*Myōhō renga kyō*) of the *Lotus Sutra* to reach his conclusion:

He begins by analyzing the first two kanji, *myōhō* 妙法 (marvelous Dharma) into their component parts: *jo* 女 (girl), *shō* 少 (small), *mizu* 水 (water) and *saru* 去 (to leave). He then rearranges these parts into the phrase, "Young girl leaving the water," which he takes as a reference to the Devadatta chapter of the Lotus Sutra... Zenchiku argues that the fact that this chapter is mentioned in the title must mean that the Devadatta chapter is central to the sutra: "as it is titled The Sutra of the Lotus of the Girl Leaving the Water, the significance (儀) of the Dragon Girl [Naga King's daughter] must be profound."⁵⁵

While this analysis of Zenchiku's *Meishukushū* demonstrates the centrality of the *Lotus Sutra* within medieval conceptions of female soteriology and esoteric allegorical readings of the text in general, other factors must be considered when considering the reception of the "Devadatta" chapter in Japanese Buddhism and premodern literature. Two defining factors at play are the rhetorical juxtaposition of the Dragon Princess versus the figure of Devadatta, and the introduction of the Buddhological concept of the "Five Obstructions" (五障, *goshō*). In his article "Dragon-Girl, Maidenflower, Buddha: The Transformation of a Waka Topos, 'The Five Obstructions,'" Edward Kamens states that the Dragon Princess is a young girl of inhuman, bestial origin. She therefore acts as an allegorical

⁵³ Hurvitz, *Lotus Sutra*, 184.

⁵⁴ Allan G. Grappard was the first English-language scholar to utilize the term "paronomasia" to discuss the criticality of word-associations in defining premodern Japanese religious beliefs. Klein, "Esotericism in Noh Commentaries and Plays", 249.

⁵⁵ Klein, *Dancing the Dharma*, chapter 3.

figure to represent the potentiality for enlightenment via the *Lotus Sutra* of all women, children, and animals. Yet, this virtuous and intelligent girl who magically achieves enlightenment is compared to a man who attempted to kill the Buddha and disintegrate the monastic order. How and why is this comparison made?

The answer lies within “Devadatta” itself: because women are polluted and Abject. When Bodhisattva Manjushri first relates the Dragon Princess’s accomplishments in acquisition of the dharma to the Buddha, his own disciple Sariputra (舍利弗, J. *Shariputra*) doubts these claims. He accosts the Dragon Princess when she appears before them, saying,

A woman’s body is filthy, it is not a dharma receptacle... Also, a woman’s body even then has five obstacles. It cannot become first a Brahma god king, second the god Sakra, third King Mara, fourth a sage-king turning the wheel, fifth a buddha body.⁵⁶

These five levels of rebirth are indicative of the accruing of positive karma and gradual ascension toward Buddhahood. As previously mentioned, the Dragon Princess then stuns all assembled by first transforming into a man and then becoming a full Buddha, instantly achieving enlightenment. The purpose of this demonstration in “Devadatta” is to illustrate the power of the *Lotus Sutra* to provide instant enlightenment for even women, as it could bypass the countless eons of waiting for the unattainable rebirth their gender and abject nature deprived them of.

Here, my use of the terms abject and abjection refers to Julia Kristeva’s concept of the “Abject” as outlined in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Kristeva’s conceptual structure provides a highly effective theoretical methodology for analyzing sacred texts dealing with gender-based biological purity and pollution. As defined by Kristeva in *Powers of Horror*, the Abject is that which is neither the Object nor the Self:

The Abject has only one quality of the Object—that of being opposed to *I*. What is *Abject*, on the contrary, the jettisoned Object, is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Hurvitz, *Lotus Sutra*, 184.

This exclusion of the Abject from the Self also predicates its exclusion from the established order of society. That which constitutes the Abject, the “jettisoned object” Kristeva speaks of, includes the internal contents of the human body. Items such as blood, bile, feces, other fluids, and waste materials are all cited. Julia Kristeva argues that these fluids, such as blood, are typically kept hidden inside the body under normal circumstances. The established symbolic, social, and psychological order is broken traumatically when they are revealed, thus causing us to react with horror. As one of the most repulsive and symbolically charged of the abject bodily fluids in Kristeva’s theoretical schemata, the role played by menstrual blood and blood passed during childbirth is critical to understanding negative female biology as portrayed in the *Lotus Sutra*. This negativity is due to its dangerous properties as a powerful pollutant, along with its function as an embodiment of female gender and sexuality:

Menstrual blood... stands for the danger issuing from within the identity (social or sexual); it threatens the relationship between the sexes within a social aggregate and, through internalization, the identity of each sex in the face of sexual difference.⁵⁸

The only way to circumvent the abject and spiritually polluted problem of the female body was to transform into a male, a physical impossibility.

While the “Devadatta” chapter and the *Lotus Sutra* generally were primarily concerned with speeding up the process of enlightenment, the “Five Obstacles” Sariputra spoke of became the primary focus for women in Japan. Kamens’s study clearly shows that reception of the *Lotus Sutra* in Japan drew heavily on the “Devadatta” chapter, especially in poetry of the Heian period. Commonly referred to as the “Five Obstructions” in the Japanese context, these were a real concern for Japanese women and were often mentioned in the poetry of Buddhist nuns and notable poets. One of the most well-cited examples comes from

⁵⁷ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 1-2.

⁵⁸ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 71.

the work of Izumi Shikibu, who lamented that she could not continue her pilgrimage to the sacred Kumano Shrine because her “monthly obstruction” (menstrual cycle) had started.⁵⁹ This example demonstrates that the Five Obstructions were not conceived in abstract terms in Japan, but as real physical attributes build into the physical nature of women’s bodies. This integration of spiritual pollution with the flesh itself became one of the core elements of the Japanese definition of the feminine and the female body during the medieval period. It also illustrates the centrality of sacred spaces and geographic locations within medieval religiosity. Sacred spaces and geographic locations, from Buddhist temples to *kami* worship shrines to sacred mountains and other geographic features with spiritual resonances, required ritual purification before entering. Ritual and spiritual purity in connection with sacred and physical space is deeply engrained in the consciousness of Japanese religious life. This connection can be seen in the performance of ritual ablutions of purification, *misogi* (禊). Prior to the Nara period (716-1185), purification in rivers and streams was primarily a communal practice, however with the consolidation of powerful Buddhist institutional practice in the capital of Heijōkyō (平城京),⁶⁰ waterways in the city became major sites of individualized purification rituals meant to deal with impurity viewed as the main source of personal misfortune.⁶¹

This focus on the physicality of the female body as a site of abjection that was to be excluded from sacred space and locality was primarily due to the permeation of the *honji suijaku* paradigm throughout the medieval Japanese religious experience. I will now turn to a closer examination of that paradigm.

⁵⁹ Kamens, “Dragon-Girl, Maidenflower, Buddha”, 427-8.

⁶⁰ Present day Nara City, Nara prefecture.

⁶¹ Mori, “Ancient and Classical Japan”, 53.

Section 2: The Centrality of the *Honji Suijaku* Paradigm in Defining Medieval Japanese Religiosity and Suffering Through the *Rokudō*

The medieval Japanese religious world operated on the *honji suijaku* paradigm (本地垂迹, the buddhas as original enlightenment, the *kami* as traces) where Buddhism, *kami* worship, and multiple religious and philosophical systems were combined in an amalgamation asserting the ultimate authority of the Buddhist Dharma.⁶² As mentioned in section 1, paronomasia played a critical role in delineating religious thought in Japan and this was especially true in the establishment of the *honji suijaku* paradigm. As an example of this dynamic at work, Allan G. Grappard writes in relation to the establishment of control over the Kasuga Grand Shrine by the Hossō-sect (法相) Kōfukuji temple during the Heian period,

Furthermore, the rationale governing the *kami*-buddha/bodhisattva associations was grounded in the Heian aristocracy's favorite game, namely, that of making associations, which allowed an interplay between unrelated objects. This may have something to do with the fact that the Japanese language—often called “vernacular” in distinction from “Chinese” (*kanbun*)—itself came about as the result of systematic associations of indigenous and foreign streams, thus the process of associating indigenous and foreign divinities was modeled on the process of assimilation found in language. Consequently, the associations between divinities of a given cult obeyed linguistically grounded modes of combination such as association, metaphor, palindrome, anagram, and anagogy. No single theory alone elucidates the nature of the choices made in associating a given divinity to another one, and therefore research on these phenomena must be conducted cultic site by cultic site. The well-known known *honji-suijaku* theory, which advocates that the *kami* are hypostases of buddhas and bodhisattvas, is sometimes inadequate, and in any case, it is so little discussed that it can hardly be considered important. It was, in fact, a practice not a theory.⁶³

Grappard makes two key points in the above passage: the primacy of language and paronomasia in defining the *honji suijaku* paradigm in Japanese religiosity; and that the combinatory relationship of Buddhism with *kami* worship was not theoretical but *practical* at all historic levels. Another important element of the *honji suijaku* paradigm emphasized by Grappard is the dominance of Buddhist institutions and ultimately discourse in the combinatory relationships: buddhas and bodhisattvas were considered the “parents” in

⁶² Teeuwen and Rambelli, “Introduction,” 4-7.

⁶³ Grappard, *Protocol of the Gods*, 81-2.

relation to *kami*, who were their “children”; and Buddhist institutions controlled the administration of rituals, estates, and revenue streams of *kami* worship shrines.⁶⁴

As mentioned in section 1, purification rituals already had a long-established tradition in Japanese *kami* worship and regional religious practice prior to the arrival of Buddhism; these traditions were reinforced by the new religion. It is also important to note that when considering taboos involving impurity, blood and menstruation were considered two of the most violating. In the Heian period, court rituals based on Ying-Yang divination (陰陽道, *onmyōdō*) adapted from China, proliferated and disseminated widely, serving to reinforce ideals of ritual purity as central to spiritual health and personal safety.⁶⁵ By the medieval period, the concept of *kegare* (汚れ, defilement), meaning both “filth” and “exhausted energy,” became central to preserving ritual purity in combinatory religious worship, the demarcation of sacred space (both *kami* worship and Buddhist), and the entirety of the paradigmatic *honji suijaku* religious environment of Japan.⁶⁶ As mentioned above, a woman’s menstrual cycle with its passing of blood, was viewed as desecration to sacred spaces and geographic locations. This also applied to other female-specific biological acts, such as childbirth. Medieval religious response to blood passed during menstruation and childbirth as a source of *kegare* was not uniform but shifted in severity over time and by belief system.⁶⁷ In general, however, the notion of impurity as a biologically binding element of women’s physiological and spiritual nature was a baseline belief of the era, limiting their access to sacred spaces and localities.

⁶⁴ Grappard, *Protocol of the Gods*, 82.

⁶⁵ Faure, *Power of Denial*, 71.

⁶⁶ Faure, *Power of Denial*, 69.

⁶⁷ *Onmyōdō* and several *kami* worship sects (such as Ise Grand Shrine) viewed *kegare* via female blood harshly, as did Nichiren, who viewed menstruation as “the moral defilement of women.” Other Buddhist leaders held more positive views, with founder of the Pure Land Buddhist Jōdo sect Hōnen denying female blood as *kegare* to person or place. Rinzaï Zen monk Mujū also discounted female blood as defilement, proclaiming “if only the heart is pure, the body likewise is not defiled.” Faure, *Power of Denial*, 71-3.

This focus on space and location extended to other aspects of the medieval Japanese religious environment. Central to the development of *honji suijaku* paradigm during the late Heian period preceding the medieval era, and crucial for understanding soteriological status within this specific schema, was the importance of the physical and metaphysical location of Japan itself within the overall Buddhist worldview. Religious scholar Itō Satoshi writes;

Japan was located in the periphery of the Buddhist universe. Japan was often described as an ‘outlying land, like scattered grains of millet’ (*sokusan hendo*), situated so far away from the center of the Buddhist Universe that the beneficence of Buddhism could reach it only in a much weakened form. In this world view, the inhabitants of Japan were inferior beings with a limited capacity on the Buddhist path.

Parallel to the emergence of this image of Japan, we encounter an image of the world as consisting of three centers, each with its own periphery. In order of diminishing importance, these three centers were India, China and Japan – the three countries through which Buddhism was transmitted. Here, Japan was at least identified as a center of Buddhist culture comparable (if not equal) to India and China. In other words, the fact that Buddhism had established itself as firmly in Japan as in the other two centers of Buddhism was grasped upon as a matter of pride that raised the status of Japan in the world.

Japan was once more defined as a land of the gods within the context of this understanding of the world as consisting of three great Buddhist centers. According to *honji suijaku* theory the kami of Japan were emanations of various buddhas and bodhisattvas, and so, as a land of the gods Japan was at the same time a Buddhist land – and, importantly, a Buddhist land in a distinctly Japanese way.⁶⁸

Itō demonstrates the critical role of both physical space and geographical location in defining the religious environment of Japan as early as the mid-Heian period.⁶⁹ On the one hand, Japan was at geographic disadvantage by being so far removed from the central axis of the Buddhist cosmos (India), thus making transmission of the Dharma and its enlightening power lose effect over distance. However, it was conversely blessed by its status as a sacred space, physically and spiritually, inhabited by native *kami* who were in fact emanations of the Dharma, albeit manifested in different forms. It was within this combinatory thought system,

⁶⁸ Itō, “Kami Merged with Buddhism,” 80-1.

⁶⁹ Itō cites the Buddhist compilation work *Shingon fuhō san'yōshō* (真言付纂要抄, 1060) by the Shingon monk Seizon (成尊, 1012-1074) as defining Japan as “the original land of Dainichi” (大日如来, *Dainichi nyorai*, The Cosmic Buddha). Itō, “Kami Merged with Buddhism,” 81.

which included the spiritual blockages of the *goshō* (from Buddhism) and *kegare* (from *kami* worship), that medieval Japanese women lived, died, and hoped for enlightenment. Therefore, it is not surprising that the nature of *jōbutsu*, Buddhist enlightenment, and the possibility of achieving it either within one's lifetime or after death remained a real concern for women in medieval Japan society. By the time of Zenchiku, influential Buddhist ideologies addressing these concerns permeated the Japanese consciousness at all levels of society.

When specifically considering the problem of female soteriology, it is helpful to define the core of Buddhism, that is, the quest for the cessation of the cycle of *saṃsāra* (輪廻, J. *rinnen*.) As defined by *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, *saṃsāra* is the Sanskrit and Pali word for “wandering,” and is generally glossed as the “cycle of rebirth.” To quote:

The realms that are subject to rebirth are typically described as composed of six rebirth destinies: divinities, demi-gods or titans, humans, animals, ghosts, and hell denizens. These destinies are all located within the three realms of existence which comprises the entirety of our universe.⁷⁰

There are multiple levels of heavenly realms occupied by divinities, as well several tiers of realms occupied by the hell denizens, who torment the damned. In these realms, only happiness or suffering can be experienced, making Buddhist practice and realization of enlightenment impossible. It is only in the human realm that religious practice is possible,

because it is the only birth where both suffering and happiness can be readily experienced, allowing the adept to recognize more easily the true character of life as impermanent, suffering, and nonself.⁷¹

Furthermore, the entire process of *saṃsāra* has no origin and only comes to complete cessation when all sentient beings achieve enlightenment.⁷² Examining or producing a precise definition of Buddhist enlightenment, *nirvāṇa* (涅槃, J. *nehan*), for female-spirits is beyond the scope of this current study. However, defining *saṃsāra* is especially pertinent for the

⁷⁰ Buswell and Lopez, *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 758.

⁷¹ Buswell and Lopez, *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 758.

⁷² Buswell and Lopez, *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 758.

understanding of the soteriological status and mechanism for enlightenment of female-spirits within Zenchiku's plays, as their spiritual suffering through this endless "wandering" is the defining feature of these works. It is manifested in medieval Japanese religiosity through the concept of the *rokudō* (六道) the six realms (literally, "paths") of transmigration.

The concept of the *rokudō* (Sk. *ṣaḍgatīḥ*) permeated all forms of religious experience in Japan. While the original Sanskrit terminology refers to the six destinies of rebirth within *samsāra*, with their associated realms of existence and characteristics,⁷³ the Japanese interpretation additionally emphasized the act of wandering *itself* through all six realms (六道輪廻, *rokudō rinnen*) of potential rebirths for all beings of the Four Kinds of Births⁷⁴ (四生, *shishō*, i.e. all sentient beings) along with the accruing of karmic sin or merit.⁷⁵ Central to the understanding of the *rokudō* were conceptions of hells, depictions of which gained widespread influence in textual descriptions and visual art. An important aspect of the *rokudō* that would prove influential in its impact on Japanese Buddhism and overall religious belief systems in the country can be tied back to its initial development in Chinese Buddhism. The evolution of the conceptions of human suffering through multiple existences developed during the Sui (581-681) and into the Tang (618-907) Dynasties, in concert with two influential Buddhological beliefs: that the cosmos had entered the Latter Day of the Law (末法, C. *mòfǎ*; J. *mappō*) in which the Dharma could no longer be understood or practiced and therefore reliance on salvation through the supernatural power of buddhas and bodhisattvas

⁷³ Buswell and Lopez, *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 731 and 315-4.

⁷⁴ The four methods that sentient beings are either born or come into existence. *Jarāyu-ja* (胎生, J. *taishō*) is birth by womb, thus all mammals including humans. *Aṇḍaja* (卵生, J. *ranshō*), birth from egg, designates animals such as fish, birds, and other creatures born from eggs. *Saṃsveda-ja* (湿生, J. *shisshō*), birth from moisture, indicates the humid air and moisture from where insects were thought to have arisen. Finally, *upapādu-ka* (化生, J. *keshō*), birth from transformation, is used to describe beings who suddenly come into existence, such as the deities of heaven realms and denizens of hell realms. Nakamura, *et al.*, *Iwanami Bukkyō jiten*, 354.

⁷⁵ Nakamura, *et al.*, *Iwanami Bukkyō jiten*, 848.

such as Amitābha (阿弥陀如来, C. *Āmítuófó rúlaí*, J. *Amida nyorai*), Avalokiteśvara (觀音菩薩, C. *Guānyīn púsà*, J. *Kannon bosatsu*), and Ksitigarbha (地藏菩薩, C. *Dìzàng púsà*, J. *Jizō bosatsu*) was necessary.⁷⁶ As the Tang Dynasty in China coincided with a time of great importation and adaptation of Buddhological knowledge into Japan, most notably through the trip to China in 804 of Tendai (天台) founder Saichō (最澄, 767-822) and Shingon (真言) founder Kūkai (空海, 774-835), which led to the establishment of their respective sects. The importance of Buddhist deities as agents of soteriological agency able to free sentient beings from non-stop suffering in the torments of the *rokudō*, particularly in daily life and hell realms, became a central theme in Japanese religiosity. Although this belief that the efficacy of the Buddha's teachings had faded had its origins in India and, as noted above, developed further in Sui and Tang Dynasty China, it took strong hold in Japan by the late Heian and early Kamakura period, especially with the then new school of Pure Land Buddhism. This may have been predicated on the endemic warfare and social discord of the era, which appeared to corroborate the idea that the order of the cosmos was out of balance and salvation was only possible through the quick and immediate methods espoused by Pure Land sects.⁷⁷

The concept of the *rokudō*, with its associated belief in the soteriological power of buddhas and bodhisattvas, and the desperation brought on by living in the Latter Day of the Law, had a profound effect on Japanese culture. The first known textual citation of the term *rokudō* in Japan was in the *Nihon Ryōiki* (compiled between 810-824), a *setsuwa* collection edited by Nara period Buddhist monk Kyōkai.⁷⁸ Suffering along the *rokudō* and the effect of karma on its workings is a central theme in Murasaki Shikibu's mid-Heian *Genji monogatari*, a work that profoundly influenced medieval Japanese sensibility. The theme of negative karma and suffering through the cycle of rebirths along the *rokudō* is also highlighted in

⁷⁶ Nakamura, *et al.*, *Iwanami Bukkyō jiten*, 848.

⁷⁷ Nakamura, *et al.*, *Iwanami Bukkyō jiten*, 758-9.

⁷⁸ *Shogakukan Online Dictionary*, Shogakukan Inc.

Kamo no Chōmei’s late-Heian essay *Hōjōki* (方丈記, An Account of My Ten-Foot-Square Hut), which depicts a series of natural and manmade disasters befalling the city of Kyōto.⁷⁹ The military classic *Heike Monogatari* frequently references the *rokudō* and suffering due to fate, rebirth, and hope for salvation experienced during the horrors of the Genpei War. In the field of visual arts, the theme of suffering through multiple rebirths during the “wandering” process of the *rokudō* spread among mid and late-Heian period screen and scroll paintings.⁸⁰

By the Muromachi period, belief in the *rokudō*, its associated suffering, and the necessity of the supernatural power of buddhas and bodhisattvas for salvation, was deeply ingrained in the religious environment of Japan. For the female-spirit Noh plays of Zenchiku, this belief helps explain why the primary dramatic structure of these plays is the plight of a female-spirit who is suffering due to negative karma and pain from inability to transmigrate, that the spirit is drawn to a specific sacred space where she importunes a religious practitioner who holds special ritual knowledge to aid in her release. However, were there any other tools that the female-spirit could utilize within Japanese Buddhism to aid in her release from the painful, seemingly endless cycle of the *rokudō*? One influential concept that had a major impact on the religious world of medieval Japan was *hongaku shisō* (本覚思想), “original enlightenment thought,” frequently referred to as simply *hongaku*. Originally associated with the Tendai sect of Buddhism, *hongaku*-based beliefs became deeply ingrained in the fabric of the medieval Japanese *honji suijaku* paradigmatic worldview, partially due to the non-dualism fundamental to original enlightenment thought, which as we shall see enabled a high degree of flexibility in adopting and adapting other combinatory thought systems.

⁷⁹ Nakamura, *et al.*, *Iwanami Bukkyō jiten*, 848.

⁸⁰ Nakamura, *et al.*, *Iwanami Bukkyō jiten*, 848.

Section 3: The Influence of *Hongaku shisō* on Conceptions of Soteriology in Combinatory Religiosity

The soteriological concept of *hongaku* is one of the most pervasive yet seemingly paradoxical Buddhological beliefs to emerge in medieval Japanese religiosity. Like the *rokudō* and its associated beliefs, *hongaku* “original enlightenment” (C. *benjue*) had its origins in Chinese Buddhist thought, specifically in apocryphal texts such as the *Dàshéng Qǐxìn Lùn* (大乘起信論, J. *Daijōkishinron*). This text discussed a radical and new methodology for enlightenment that would prove highly influential when brought to Japan:

The *Dàshéng Qǐxìn Lùn* posited a distinction between the potentiality to become a buddha that was inherent in the minds of every sentient being, as expressed by the term “original enlightenment”; and the soteriological process through which that potential for enlightenment had to be put into practice, which it called “actualized enlightenment” (C. *shijue*; J. *shikaku*). This distinction is akin to the notion that a person may in reality *be* enlightened (original enlightenment), but still needs to learn through a course of religious training how to *act* on that enlightenment (actualized enlightenment). This scheme was further developed in numerous treatises and commentaries written by Chinese exegetes in the Di Lun Zong, Huayan Zong, and Tiantai Zong.

In medieval Japan, this imported soteriological interpretation of “original enlightenment” was reinterpreted into an ontological affirmation of things just as they are. Enlightenment was thence viewed not as a soteriological experience, but instead as something made manifest in the lived reality of everyday life. *Hongaku* doctrine thought also had wider cultural influences, and was used, for example, to justify conceptually incipient doctrines of the identity between the buddhas and bodhisattvas of Buddhism and the indigenous deities (*kami*) of Japan.⁸¹

The transmission of “original enlightenment” doctrine from China to Japan was directly affected by the *honji suijaku* paradigm and not only in its emphasis on the combinatory nature of indigenous belief systems with imported Buddhological concepts, but through the understanding of the ontological primacy of present space and time as vital to the Japanese shamanic concept of the universe, in which the land itself was sacred and incorruptible. The term “original enlightenment thought” (i.e. *hongaku shisō*) was first coined by modern Buddhologist Shimaji Daitō (島地大等, 1875-1927) to express the medieval Tendai Buddhist

⁸¹ Buswell and Lopez, *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 353.

idea that the entirety of the cosmos is an expression of enlightenment. According to Jacqueline I. Stone, Shimaji argued that a core belief of medieval Tendai *hongaku* thought (also present in the wider religious environment) was that,

enlightenment or the ideal state as inherent from the outset and as accessible in the present, rather than as the fruit of a long process of cultivation. More specifically, Shimaji used “original enlightenment thought” to designate the intellectual mainstream of medieval Japanese Tendai Buddhism. In this medieval Tendai context, “original enlightenment thought” denotes an array of doctrines and concepts associated with the proposition that all beings are enlightened inherently. Not only human beings, but ants and crickets, mountains and rivers, grasses and trees are innately Buddhas. The Buddhas who appear in sutras, radiating light and endowed with excellent marks, are merely provisional signs. The “real” Buddha is the ordinary worldling. Indeed, the whole phenomenal world is the primordially enlightened Tathāgata. Seen in their true light, all forms of daily conduct, even one’s delusive thoughts, are, without transformation, the expressions of original enlightenment. Liberation is reimagined, not as the eradication of mental defilements or as achieving birth in a pure land after death, but as the insight, or even the faith, that one has been enlightened from the very beginning.⁸²

Hongaku contains non-dualism as one of its core tenants. Non-dualistic thought (不二, Sk. *advaya*, C. *bu’er*, J. *funi*) is a foundational principle of Mahāyāna Buddhism and is knowledge that,

transcends the subject-object bifurcations that govern all conventional states of consciousness and engenders a distinctive type of awareness that no longer requires an object of consciousness.⁸³

While non-dualistic teachings were already central to many of the teachings of Japanese Buddhism, as may be inferred from Stone’s above description, medieval Tendai-based *hongaku* elevated non-dualism to the forefront of ontological and soteriological discussion and into the mainstream of Japanese religious consciousness. As mentioned above, the Tendai sect of Buddhism was founded by Saichō following his return from study in China in 805. Although primarily based on the Chinese Tiantai sect and espousing the superiority of the *Lotus Sutra*, Saichō studied widely, incorporating key elements of the Chinese Huayen (J.

⁸² Stone, *Original Enlightenment*, 3.

⁸³ Buswell and Lopez, *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 18.

Kegon) sect,⁸⁴ as well as ideas formed through his intellectual exchange with Shingon founder Kūkai,⁸⁵ to formulate the *hongaku* doctrines that would ground much of Tendai belief. Due to Saichō's influential connections in the early Heian court, the Tendai headquarters of the Enryakuji (延暦寺) complex on Mount Hiei (比叡山) near Kyōto would grow into one of the most politically, financially, and militarily powerful Buddhist institutions in the nation.⁸⁶ Subsequently, Tendai concepts, such as the belief in *hongaku*, spread throughout Japan.

Despite the prevalence of Tendai Buddhism and *hongaku* beliefs positing a conception of a world that was already enlightened, thus making the prospect of enlightenment available to all, the problem of the *rokudō*, with its emphasis on constant suffering and karmic sin, was still unavoidable. As seen above, this would have been especially pertinent for women, whose physical selves were seen as either soteriologically disadvantaged within basic Buddhist conceptions of enlightenment, or contaminated with *kegare* due to their natural biological processes by taboos sustained within the *honji suijaku* paradigm. This was further problematized by the possibility of falling into eternal wandering along the *rokudō* due to negative karma accrued either in the present or due to actions in a past life. Additionally, the highly non-dualistic nature of *hongaku* thought that viewed all reality and action, both positive and negative, as originating in enlightenment, made differentiation difficult for both elite religious thinkers and everyday followers. If all phenomenological reality was already enlightened, rendering the *rokudō* and *jōbutsu* one and the same, how were they able to be fundamentally differentiated? On top of everything else, as noted above, the late-Heian/early-Kamakura periods saw the development of a widespread

⁸⁴ Stone, *Original Enlightenment*, 14.

⁸⁵ Stone, *Original Enlightenment*, 10-2.

⁸⁶ Mikael S. Adolphson discuss the initial growth of Enryakuji and the Tendai's political power, before becoming one of the dominant regional powers in the nation. Adolphson, *Gates of Power*, 37-44.

belief in the negative karma of the Latter Day of the Law, a belief instigated by political unrest and increased military violence. It was during this era that Pure Land Buddhism, pioneered by former Tendai monks Hōnen (法然, 1133-1212, founder of the Jōdo sect, 浄土) and Shinran (親鸞, 1173-1263, founder of the Jōdo shinshū sect, 浄土真宗) rose to prominence with their espousal of salvation through faith in Amida, the Buddha of Infinite Light, and the chanting of the *nenbutsu* (念仏), which called on Amida's name. The soteriology of several Noh plays is based in Pure Land Buddhist beliefs, including the chanting of the *nenbutsu* by the *shite*.⁸⁷ However, there was another potential option for salvation or spiritual assistance open, one that figured heavily in all aspects the *honji suijaku* worldview of medieval Japan. This is the role of shamanic ritual as practiced by an ascetic who communicates either with those possessed by spirits or spirits themselves. The role of the ascetic, in the form of the *waki* character, is a central feature in female-spirit Noh plays, and one that ties together all the disparate threads of Japanese religiosity in the dramaturgy of the play.

Section 4: Honji Suijaku, Ascetics, and Shamanic Ritual- The Role of the Waki

The principle figure in the practice of kami worship in Japan, which plays a major role in the *honji suijaku* religiosity of the nation's medieval era, is the shaman. It is the shaman who acts as an intermediary between the mortal realm and the spiritual realm of the kami. When describing the cosmos of *kami* worship Japan, Carmen Blacker writes that it is highly ambiguous and does not follow either a horizontal axis or the three-tiered system of heaven, realm of humans, and realm of the dead (黄泉, J. *yomi*) as delineated by the Kojiki

⁸⁷ Notable examples include the Zeami-attributed Second Category warrior plays *Sanemori* (実盛) and *Atsumori*, where both warrior-spirits chant the *nenbutsu* (南無阿弥陀, *Namu Amida butsu*) in the closing passage of the play, thus signaling their enlightenment. Plutschow. *Chaos and Cosmos*, 236-8

(古事記, 712), Japan's oldest collection of native myths.⁸⁸ Instead, she cites two physical locations as sites of the otherworldly realm of the divine: within the oceans surrounding Japan and in its mountains.⁸⁹ The intermediary spaces where the land meets the ocean (or other bodies of water such as lakes and rivers) and the where the peaks of mountains soar into the heavens signify the gateways into the sacred locations and divine space of the *kami*. Furthermore, only select people with special knowledge and abilities can access these sites and communicate with the divine beings who dwell within. These are shamans and they have played a crucial role in Japanese society since its onset. Blacker differentiates between two distinct types of shamans: the medium and the ascetic. The medium is the *miko* (巫女) of premodern *kami* worship and modern Japanese Shintō, who performs ritual observances at a shrine dedicated to the divinities and communicates with them by entering a trance, allowing the *kami* to speak through her. The ascetic is usually male and gains his spiritual power by undergoing strict physical and religious training, such as performing *misogi*, ritual cleansing, under waterfalls and chanting sutras. They are noted for their ability to heal the sick and exorcise malevolent spirits.⁹⁰

When we consider the plot structure of *mugen* (dream vision) Noh, the importance of such shamans within *honji suijaku* religiosity becomes clearer. To recap, a Buddhist monk (played by the *waki*) encounters a spirit (played by the *shite*) suffering from karmic delusion, thus trapped in the pain of the *rokudō*. The spirit, appearing initially as an ordinary person, slowly reveals pieces of its story, also hinting at its true-identity. The monk promises to hold pacification rites to assist in the spirit's transmigration, thereby breaking the cycle of the *rokudō* and releasing the spirit into enlightenment. In the second act of the play, the spirit reemerges in its true form, enacts its full story and the cause of its karmic delusion,

⁸⁸ Blacker, *Catalpa Bow*, 69-70.

⁸⁹ Blacker, *Catalpa Bow*, 75 and 79.

⁹⁰ Blacker, *Catalpa Bow*, 21-2.

punctuated by a final dance. Of importance is the passage where the monk promises to hold pacification rites for the spirit. The Japanese term used in most *mugen* Noh plays is *tomurafu* (弔ふ), defined by the *Iwanami kogo jiten* as a consonant alternant form of the verbal *toburafu* (訪ふ/弔ふ).⁹¹ However, the meaning of *toburafu* changes depending on the Chinese character utilized for the verb stem. Use of the character 弔ふ, which is always employed in the text of *mugen* Noh plays, is defined as holding *kuyō* (供養, funerary or memorial) services to pacify and commemorate the dead.⁹² This reoccurring textual example of providing funerary services for the enlightenment of spirits embedded within the dramaturgic fabric of the plays indicates the critical shamanic role of the *waki* in *mugen* Noh. Even more intrinsic to the *waki*'s status as a shaman is that they are in communication with the spirit to begin with. This is achieved through their status as religious ascetics and the visionary journey they undertake to encounter the spirit to perform the crucial *kuyō* ritual.

Blacker states that fully ordained monks of Buddhist sects such as Tendai, Shingon, and Nichiren frequently perform severe austerities as part of their initiation in religious life and future specialization in healing spiritual ailments.⁹³ The *waki* in Zenchiku's plays under analysis in this study may closely fit into this category: the Taoist wizard of *Yōkihi* and the traveling Buddhist monks of *Tamakazura* and *Nonomiya* are all men who would possess spiritual knowledge and expertise that would allow them the ability to traverse the mortal plane and spirit realms. The ascetic can accomplish this by three distinct methods: through a supernatural dream (dream-vision); divine possession by a spirit or god (神憑り, *kamigakari*); and finally, in the mantic journey where the ascetic's soul (魂, *tamashii*) is guided across the threshold to the other realm, usually by a guardian divinity.⁹⁴ Dreams have

⁹¹ Ōno, *et al.*, *Iwanami kogo jiten hoteiban*, 951.

⁹² Ōno, *et al.*, *Iwanami kogo jiten hoteiban*, 947-8.

⁹³ Blacker, *Catalpa Bow*, 165.

⁹⁴ Blacker, *Catalpa Bow*, 168.

a long history of supernatural, spiritual, and literary provenance in Japan and in the case of *mugen* Noh, the dream-vision appears to be the most common type of shamanic communion between the *waki* and the spirit *shite*.⁹⁵ Often, the lines between dream-vision and mantic journey are somewhat blurred in the realm of *mugen* Noh, however the importance of the *waki*'s role as ascetic bridging the gap between phenomenological realms remains key. It is this character, who possesses both ascetic ability and Buddhological ritual knowledge, that the female-spirit *shite* implores to release her from the pain of negative karma and entrapment within the *rokudō*.

When considering the various religious concepts that combined to create the distinctive conditions of the *honji suijaku* religious environment for women and their soteriological concerns, it is also important to consider their original socio-historical context. In the next section, socio-historic developments that directly impacted women and their personal agency in the medieval era will be addressed.

Section 5: Socio-Historic Developments Impacting Women in the Medieval Era

While the *honji suijaku* religious environment presented multiple spiritual potentialities that engendered suffering and equally complex methodologies toward enlightenment for women, what social conditions and historical developments did they face in the medieval era? Hitomi Tonomura's article, "Women and Inheritance in Japan's Early Warrior Society" examines legal documents from a historiographical perspective to illustrate the shift from the matrilineal marriage system of the Heian period to the patrilineal system that would dominate by the Muromachi. The marriage system underwent major changes with the rise of warrior (*mononofu* or *bushi*) dominance over all social and government institutions

⁹⁵ The Daoist wizard in *Yōkihi* undertakes a mantic journey, which will be examined in chapter 4. The play's structure and overall dramaturgy is highly atypical for Third Category plays.

in the Kamakura period. The matrilineal marriage system was a roadblock to this consolidation of power by the male-run warrior clans. The military government's main impetus for increased denial of women's inheritance of land claims and the shift toward a purely patrilineal marriage system was due to the nature of Japanese warrior society itself. Warrior inheritance of family property, clan titles, and the ensuing rights were not initially based on primogeniture and often resulted in violent inter-family disputes that split administrative domains and severely cut into overall taxable land. Furthermore, the established practice under the old system of granting land holdings to both parties of a marriage so they could establish separate households was economically unsustainable as resources and land became increasingly scarce in the early thirteenth century.⁹⁶ This led the shogunate to create new laws regarding the legal status of women in marriage that would stabilize inheritance.

Tomomura argues that the most fundamental change in the institution of marriage was the legal requirement that women must physically live with the families of their husbands. This discontinued the old system that allowed women to run and maintain independent households.⁹⁷ This major change was followed by more incremental changes to marriage and property law initiated by the military government, changes that divested women of their economic, domestic, and personal legal rights, until women had become the virtual property of their husband and his family.⁹⁸

While Tomomura's analysis is historical, the subject of the female body as site for the Subject within the greater socio-religious context of medieval Japan moving towards the warrior-dominated Muromachi period can be seen within her study. It is important to remember that the shift to the patrilineal marriage system and the related changes in the legal

⁹⁶ Tomomura, "Women and Inheritance," 610-1.

⁹⁷ Tomomura, "Women and Inheritance," 598-9.

⁹⁸ Tomomura, "Women and Inheritance," 596-8.

status of women were not immediate but incremental developments that played out over an extended period. Nevertheless, by the time Zenchiku was active in the mid-fifteenth century, the marriage system was male-dominated, differing greatly from the earlier Heian period, in which “property rights of elite women were customary and unquestioned, whether in the form of land, residence, or movables.”⁹⁹ Ultimately, the result of these policies enacted by the shogunate was that married women lost all independent legal status:

Reproduction for the perpetuation of the lineage dictated a clearly articulated concept of marriage, and measures designed to insure calculated stability in conjugal relations—including emphasis on chastity among women and definitive removal of their divorce rights.¹⁰⁰

Whereas previously women were allowed some agency, now the female body was treated as merely a “borrowed womb.” As subjects of abjection, confined by the labor of sexual reproduction and its associated bloodshed, they were moved further to the symbolic fringes of society. This overall degradation process of individual female agency as the Heian period moved into the Kamakura and finally the Muromachi, as demonstrated in the social, political, and economic realms, was reflected in the religious and literary worlds as well. In the following section I will analyze the effects of this symbolic abjection via the medieval representation of the early Heian period female poet Ono no Komachi (小野小町, fl. 9th century), who in many ways acts as prototype for the female-spirit personas found within Third Category Noh plays.

Section 6: Establishing the Female-spirit Prototype in Historical Context—Ono no Komachi

The historical context detailed in section 5 had direct effects on the literary sphere and religious worldview of late classical and medieval Japan, especially regarding literary

⁹⁹ Tonomura, “Women and Inheritance,” 595.

¹⁰⁰ Tonomura, “Women and Inheritance,” 622.

representations of gender. The figure of Heian period Ono no Komachi and her representation in medieval Japanese literature illustrates the soteriological status and social conditions for women in the era. In *Writing Margins: The Textual Construction of Gender in Heian and Kamakura Japan*, Terry Kawashima examines textual representations of Ono no Komachi by genealogically tracing her corpus of attributed *waka* and as well as the multiple pseudo-biographical *setsuwa*, *kagaku*, and other related texts written about her. Komachi is an excellent example of the archetypal woman on the peripheries of society and history (physically, morally, and spiritually) containing elements of the Abject; over an extended period, her image is gradually subsumed by the central power structures and remolded as a subservient figure. Ono no Komachi was one of the premier poets of the first imperial *waka* anthology, *Kokinwakashū*, mentioned by name in the collection's *kana* (仮名)¹⁰¹ preface by Ki no Tsurayuki (紀貫之, 866?-945?) as one of six representative poets of defining talent. These six poets mentioned by Tsurayuki later became collectively known as the *Rokkasen* (六歌仙), the Six Poetic Immortals. In this way, Komachi is similar to fellow early Heian poet and *Rokkasen* member Ariwara no Narihira (在原業平, 825-880), upon whose life the poem-tale *Ise monogatari* was supposedly based. Yet whereas in the medieval period Narihira enjoyed a literary legacy as a romantic hero, and even achieved the status of a deity, Komachi suffered heavily as an abject figure due to her female gender. Kawashima notes that one of the critical elements about Komachi that probably appealed to later interpreters, especially Buddhist clergy, was a lack of a solid biographical history. This, more than any other factor, exposed her to marginalization. Kawashima argues these conditions are significant because they allowed the persona of Komachi to be,

invoked, changed, and reinterpreted according to the textual setting, a process that reveals the non-uniform, fluctuating aspect of the marginalization process; and they

¹⁰¹ Japanese-language preface. The collection also included a *kanbun*, classical Chinese, preface by Ki no Yoshimochi (b. 919) that would prove less influential.

[the resulting texts] had a significant impact on those responsible for literary attribution in this era.¹⁰²

In the late Heian and Kamakura periods, readers attempted to extract biographical data from Ono no Komachi's poetry to reconstruct a back-story to her life. However, there was always a fundamental disconnect of meaning between her original poetry and the figure of Komachi in the early medieval "biographies," primarily in the form of *setsuwa*, that developed around these poems. In these *setsuwa*, Ono no Komachi is represented as a proud, cold, and spiteful beauty that rejects all suitors and toys with their hearts, a persona that she will continue to play throughout the medieval period. Kawashima argues in *Writing Margins* that ultimately Komachi was targeted for marginalization for two reasons. First, her skill in poetic discourse gave her a high level of personal agency within society. Secondly, she was a key poet of the *Kokinwakashū* era and the only female poet named by Tsurayuki in his *kana* preface. Composition of *waka* was an essential part of social discourse and literary interaction within Japanese society, with Ono no Komachi being one of the early exemplars of the art form. This would have given her a great advantage in artistic, political, and sexual interactions with men. At the same time, her powerful personal agency within the poetic canon may have been problematic in the early medieval period, as the Japanese social order shifted toward a shogunal social order dominated by patrilineal warrior houses and Buddhist institutions, a shift that resulted in new negative forms of discourse concerning women.

Kawashima also argues that it was these early medieval *setsuwa*, not Ono no Komachi's poetry, that were essential in establishing her mythos in Japanese literature. Texts such as the Kamakura period *Tamatsukuri Komachi sōsuisho* (玉造小町壯衰書, The Prosperity and Decline of Tamatsukuri Komachi), *Hōbutsushū* (宝物集, An Anthology of Treasures), and *Jikkishō* (十訓抄, Ten Lessons Explained) formulated the most well-known

¹⁰² Kawashima, *Writing Margins*, 126-7.

narrative trope of Komachi's life, recreating her as a cautionary morality tale and example of feminine vice. The most common narrative portrays Komachi as a cold and cruel court beauty who embodies pride and sexual lust, only to fall from her high position into a life of suffering as a destitute old beggar woman wandering the streets in rags. Such texts, especially *Hōbutsushū* and *Jikkinshō*, were conceived as either didactic Buddhist tracts or cautionary tales for the wives and daughters of the emerging warrior families who formed the backbone of the new Kamakura society. Kawashima notes that the theme of Komachi's fall was indicative of the shift in political and cultural power in late-Heian Japan from the Imperial court to the warrior houses. By portraying Komachi as the embodiment of courtly excess, frivolity, and dangerous female sexual lust, texts such as the *Hōbutsushū* and *Jikkinshō* were asserting the superiority of the new patrilineal marriage system. Kawashima argues that these texts treat Komachi as a figure of the abject by reducing her to simplistic representations of negative female behavior that are then harshly punished. On another level, pro-patrilineal morality tales like *Hōbutsushū* and *Jikkinshō* represent Komachi as a product of her environment: raised in a matrilineal aristocratic court where women ruled behind the scenes, her sinful behavior and unfortunate fate were inevitable.¹⁰³

Komachi's marginalization was also facilitated by the rise of misogynistic sects of Pure Land Buddhism, which were consolidating power during this period. Texts associated with these sects, although still structurally built around examples of Komachi's poetry, place an even greater emphasis on her physical body, sexuality, and status as an avatar of the abject. One of the most graphic examples from this category involves Komachi's complete objectification in death through depictions in Buddhist visual art as a rotting corpse. In the picture scroll *Kusō shi emaki* (九相詩繪卷, Picture Scroll of the Nine Meditations, also subsequently known as *Ono no Komachi sōsui emaki*, 小野小町壯衰繪卷, Picture Scroll of

¹⁰³ Kawashima, *Writing Margins*, 130-52.

the Prosperity and Decline of Ono no Komachi), Komachi is depicted in a series of paintings as a rotting corpse in various stages of decay.¹⁰⁴ Commissioned to teach the importance of transcendence and not clinging to lustful thoughts connected to the flesh (specifically gendered female), *Kusō shi emaki* is entrenched in multiple Buddhological concepts, specifically *fujō* (不浄, impurity,) *kusō* (九相, the Nine Meditations), and *ōjō* (往生, Rebirth in the Pure Land.) The first, *fujō*, regarded signs of decay as signs that the corpse itself was impure and, increasingly, saw this impurity as gendered:

in the early Heian period, the image of a youthful figure who inevitably undergoes death and decay was not necessarily or explicitly female, but in the following centuries, women’s bodies were used much more overtly to exemplify this impurity.”¹⁰⁵

Kusō, the Nine Meditations, focused on the process of meditating on the corpse’s nine stages of decay and were frequently accompanied by Chinese poems describing each stage.¹⁰⁶ Finally, *ōjō*, Rebirth in the Pure Land, was the central goal of many Pure Land Buddhist sects that had risen to prominence in the early medieval period. According to Kawashima, the state of Komachi’s corpse as rotting in *Kusō shi emaki*, demonstrates that such rebirth was impossible for women: those who achieved *ōjō* presented corpses that lacked the foul stench of decay.¹⁰⁷

These examples of Ono no Komachi as represented in late Heian and early Kamakura period texts delineated in Kawashima’s scholarship provide a useful framework for approaching the female archetypes presented in Konparu Zenchiku’s third category female-spirit Noh plays. Like the “Komachi persona,” which developed over time through various genres of text and visual art, the main female character of each play examined in this dissertation is deeply embedded in the literary canon of medieval Japan to the point where the

¹⁰⁴ Kawashima, *Writing Margins*, 198.

¹⁰⁵ Kawashima, *Writing Margins*, 191.

¹⁰⁶ Poems on *kusō* by the Song Dynasty poet Su Dongpo (1037-1101) became especially popular in Japan. Kawashima, *Writing Margins*, 191.

¹⁰⁷ Kawashima, *Writing Margins*, 198.

historical personage cannot be separated from the mythic persona. A further complication is that the *shite* of many female-spirit Noh plays are not historical figures at all. For example, of the plays under analysis in chapter 4, *Tamakazura* and *Nonomiya* feature not historical women but representative heroines from Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji monogatari*. The main characters from both works (Tamakazura from her eponymous play and Lady Rokujō from *Nonomiya*) were affected by the multifaceted medieval reception of *Genji*, which left their ontological status in something of a grey area for readers who were not clear on whether *Genji monogatari* was fiction or history. The same can be said of Yang Guifei of *Yōkihi*: despite being a historical figure whose biographical details can be verified in records of the Tang Dynasty, her story reached Japan through the poetry of Tang literati Bai Juyi, its associated reception in China and Japan, and as a complex intertext with the *Genji*. Not dissimilar to Ono no Komachi, the female gender and fictional or conflated status made the “biographies” of these and similar female personas especially malleable and open to change, leaving their soteriological statuses especially fungible.

Conclusion

In conclusion, multiple elements comprising the religious environment of Muromachi Japan significantly impacted female soteriology. The “Devadatta” chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, with its the phenomenologically complex tale of the Dragon Princess, serves as the baseline text for the delineation of female soteriology in Mahāyāna Buddhist discourse. The imagery of the Dragon Princess and the *goshō* (Five Obstructions) that prevented women from achieving enlightenment were highly influential in Japanese religious and literary thought. The *goshō* were interpreted in the Japanese experience from their original Indic context as spiritual levels of rebirth the physical nature of the woman's body as a site for abjection and *kegare*, ritual defilement. This was primarily due to the influence of the *honji suijaku*

paradigm's all-encompassing influence on medieval Japanese religiosity, where the *kami* worship and Buddhism melded into a combinatory religious practice. Within this combinatory structure, suffering along the six-realms of rebirth, the *rokudō* was a major concern for women, who were seen as suffering from gender specific sins such as karmic attachment and lust. Methods of extracting themselves from the *rokudō* between this and the next lifetime were possible, however. *Hongaku shisō*, original enlightenment thought, originally a Tendai-based doctrine, claimed oneself and by extension all of reality was enlightened. This non-dualistic belief system permeated every level of the *honji suijaku* paradigmatic worldview during the medieval era. Another potential method of enlightenment was through the ritual assistance of the shamanic ascetic. Ascetics underwent austere training to gain special knowledge of the spirit realm and possessed the ability to transverse between the human and spiritual plains via dream-visions or mantic journeys. The role of the ascetic is especially pertinent when considering *mugen* Noh theater as the *waki*, or side-actor, fills the role of the ascetic, undergoing a spiritual journey to meet the spirit of the *shite*, and performs a ritual for the spirit's enlightenment.

To properly contextualize these soteriological concepts for medieval Japanese women and fully understand how they function in relation to their counterparts within the Noh theater, it is essential that they are contextualized with relevant socio-historic developments. As the Heian period moved into the Kamakura, women were increasingly divested of their rights to individual property and legal status. This was done by the new Kamakura shogunate to consolidate its power and streamline legal control under warrior households by eliminating the older Heian period system of woman maintaining their own households with control of separate properties and revenue streams. As the medieval era continued, women's personal agency was restricted even further in matters such as marriage, where they were forced to move into the homes of their husband's families and focus on producing male heirs. This

decline in reduced social and legal agency mirrored many of the restrictions placed on women within the *honji suijaku* paradigmatic system of the era. Finally, the figure of Ono no Komachi as represented in medieval literature serves to consolidate these religious and social issues for women while also serving as prototype for the female-spirit personas of Zenchiku's female-spirit plays. Komachi's lack of historically verifiable biographical information made her vulnerable to representation as in Buddhist morality tales focusing on impermanence by depicting her as a woman plagued by the karmic sin of lust who was reduced to poverty, old age, or even a rotting corpse. The karmic suffering and soteriological conflict of this medieval Komachi figured, combined with her literary origin, and highly malleable biographical information prefigures her as a prototype for the female-spirit personas that inhabit the works of Zenchiku.

In the next chapter, focus will be returned to Zenchiku and the religious institution where he focused his professional and artistic efforts, the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex. The history of the institution will be discussed as well as the importance of a major political dispute that occurred there during Zenchiku's lifetime. This political dispute possibly impacted Zenchiku in two crucial ways: it directly affected his patronage situation at the religious complex and may have had a profound influence on his perception on the stability of sacred space and location as it relates to soteriological status as expressed in his female-spirit plays.

Chapter 3: The Kōfukuji-Kasuga Complex- Institutional History, the Daijōin Political Dispute and its Impact on Zenchiku's Patronage and Worldview

Introduction

In this chapter I will turn from the religious context for medieval women, which influenced their representation in Noh, to the economic and political context facing Konparu Zenchiku and how it may have influenced the soteriological elements within his Third Category plays featuring female-spirits.

I want to preface my analysis with a short discussion of Pierre Bourdieu's highly flexible model of the field of cultural production, which I believe is helpful for placing the figure of Zenchiku within the broader historical context of Yamato province (present day Nara prefecture). To Bourdieu, all artistic processes and works that result from them occupy specific positions that make up an overall cultural field. This cultural field and its positions are themselves defined by social, political, and economic forces to create a "field of power."¹⁰⁸ Additionally important to this model is the concept of symbolic capital. By consistently disavowing economic motivations and instead framing themselves as a "true artist," skillful players in the game of cultural production can enjoy financial success. By successfully building up this symbolic capital the artist legitimizes their work, gains the respect and admiration of colleagues, and secures financial support through patronage.¹⁰⁹ Bourdieu's model, although produced to analyze European artistic patronage networks, is surprisingly effective for analyzing the patronage networks of Muromachi artistic culture, itself staged within a politically charged environment. Among recent scholarship, Noel Pinnington's *Traces in the Way: Michi and the Writings of Konparu Zenchiku* utilizes Bourdieu's methodology to demonstrate that Zenchiku's motivating interest in composing the

¹⁰⁸ Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 29-30.

¹⁰⁹ Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 75.

treatises *Rokurin ichirō* (Six Circles, One Dewdrop) and *Meishukushū* (Collection Illuminating the Indwelling Deity) was to secure the patronage of Jinson (尋尊, 1430-1508), one of the high-ranking aristocratic monastic heads of Kōfukuji. By the Muromachi period, Kōfukuji was the acing administrative center for Kasuga Grand Shrine, one of the most important *kami* worship ritual centers on the local and national level, resulting in a *honji suijaku* paradigmatic institution in Yamato province which modern scholars refer to as the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex (春日興福寺).¹¹⁰ The religio-aesthetic nature of the writings allowed Zenchiku to build symbolic capital for his troupe by appealing to Jinson's aristocratic tastes. According to Pinnington, this was directly necessitated by the convoluted and violent political situation surrounding the succession of the sixth Muromachi shogun Ashikaga Yoshinori (1394-1441) and his harsh, often arbitrary rule:

Zenchiku associated himself closely with Zeami thus gaining a certain kind of symbolic capital, but not only was the circle of metropolitan patronage extremely difficult to break into, it was also becoming less attractive. Kyoto society was becoming fragmented, and the risks for the individual were becoming higher, as was evident in such events as the beating deaths of the leading Enami [troupe] performers and Zeami's banishment. The Konparu in any case had significant symbolic capital at the Kōfukuji in Nara, for the earlier lore declared them to be the premier group of actors through their descent from participants in the legendary beginnings of *okina sarugaku*. Kōfukuji was not just a temple; it had the rights of the *shugo* (constable) of Yamato province, as well as being the clan temple of the Fujiwara. Zenchiku persuaded among others the leading aristocrat of his day, the clan head Ichijō Kanera, to underwrite his attempts to establish *sarugaku* as a manifestation of spiritual processes as well as his claims to be its foremost hereditary exponent. Kanera was the father of Jinson (1430-1508), the superintendent of Kōfukuji.... Finally, when Kyoto was collapsing in civil war, and Kōfukuji emerged as an island of aristocratic culture amidst chaos, Zenchiku resuscitated the legendary lore of his own troupe and a 'return' to spiritual motives in performance.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Omote and Amano refer to the religious institution in Japanese as Kasuga-Kōfukuji (春日興福寺) and state this was how it was referred to in the medieval period. Omote and Amano, *Nogaku no rekishi*, 38. I have followed the usage of the term "Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex" as it represents Kōfukuji's administrative, economic, and ritual control of the Kasuga Grand Shrine during the medieval period.

¹¹¹ Pinnington, *Traces in the Way*, 12-3.

Here I will use the core of Pinnington's argument—examining the role of the literary theory of *michi* in the writing of Zenchiku's treatises and those works' importance in securing his patronage at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex—as a jumping off point for a further examination of the complex internal politics between multiple rival factions within the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex during the early to mid-fifteenth century. While the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex did offer patronage opportunities that may have provided more long-term security than the shogunate in Kyōto, Zenchiku also relied on tactical political maneuvering just as much as on his appeal to aristocratic Buddhist tastes to secure the Konparu troupe's initial foothold in the elite levels of institutional bureaucracy. Additionally, the contemporary political situation at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex may have motivated Zenchiku in two key ways: first, to make critical decisions regarding his involvement with important administrative figures at religious complex that directly affected his patronage situation; second, in his overall soteriological understanding of sacred spaces and their stability as expressed in his Third Category Noh plays featuring female-spirits.

Therefore, a fuller analysis of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex's field of power in the mid-fifteenth century is necessary for a more complete understanding of Zenchiku's patronage situation and a possible rationale for the soteriological ambiguity found within his attributed Third Category Noh plays. Specifically, I will argue that a political dispute concerning rights to the rich and influential Daijōin cloistered temple (門跡, *monzeki*) at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex involving Jinson and Kyōkaku (經覚, 1395-1473), another monk of elite aristocratic status, was critical in defining the political landscape of mid-fifteenth century Yamato province and the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex. The field of power that Zenchiku was directly engaged in was defined by these political forces and the economic revenue streams they controlled.¹¹² Additionally, as a resident of Nara City who interacted

¹¹² Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 37-8.

with both men at the center of this conflict, Zenchiku may have directly experienced the military turmoil caused by this violent political dispute. This could have played an influential role in the both the politically expedient means that he chose to initially pursue patronage and may also have impacted his overall religious worldview, particularly in relation to the soteriological ambiguity of his Noh plays as demonstrated in their understanding of sacred space and location.

Utilizing passages from the diaries of Jinson and rival Kyōkaku, along with Japanese and English-language secondary scholarship, this chapter will examine the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex's status as the central polity in Yamato province; the nature of succession disputes in medieval Japan, and in particular how this specific political dispute (conflict over ownership of the rights to the Daijōin [大乘院] noble cloister, its estates, and hereditary offices) at a major Buddhist institution differed from those of warrior houses. Furthermore, I will assess the impact this political dispute at the Daijōin had on the balance of political power at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex and, finally, how the field of power formed by it may have influenced Zenchiku's patronage decisions. Section 1 will examine the Kōfukuji's background history; its rise to political dominance in Yamato province and assumption of control of Kasuga Grand Shrine, and the complex's organization system. Section 2 will examine the details of the Daijōin political dispute beginning with the vague circumstances surrounding Kyōkaku's fall from his position of high authority within the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex. First, I will consider Kyōkaku's political involvement with two key regional power brokers: the Yamato province military clan, the Furuichi (古市氏), and politically influential military governor Hatakeyama Mochikuni (畠山持国, 1398-1455). Second, Jinson's response to aggressions by this faction. Section 3 will examine Zenchiku within this field of power: his personal background; development of connections within the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex; and how this political dispute over Daijōin involving Kyōkaku and Jinson may

have influenced his patronage decisions and the soteriological ambiguity of his *mugen* Noh plays.

Section 1: The History of Kōfukuji and association with Kasuga Grand Shrine

For centuries, political power in pre-modern Japan required a delicate balancing act between the elite classes. Historian Kuroda Toshio (黒田俊雄, 1926-1993) developed the *kenmon* model (権門) to describe this balance, described by Mikael S. Adolphson as a system in which,

elites were the leaders of three power blocs—the court nobles/aristocracy (*kōke* or *kuge*), the warrior families (*buke*), and temples and shrines (*jisha*)—which ruled the realm together by sharing responsibilities of government and supporting each other’s privileges and status.¹¹³

The Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex’s direct control of Yamato province was based on its utilization of three resources: its links to the aristocracy, ownership of land, and supervision of labor. It should be noted that this labor could be for construction of temple compounds, tilling of lands, or taking up arms to defend the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex. By means of its controlling interests in these three critical resources, the temple complex dominated affairs in Yamato for centuries. As such, the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex was one of the most important political, cultural, and economic institutions in western Japan’s heartland, a critical player in the *kenmon* balance of power between the court aristocracy, warrior clans, and Buddhist institutions that ruled Japan from the tenth through fifteenth centuries.

The origins of Kōfukuji and Kasuga are both directly linked to the Fujiwara clan, the preeminent lineage of the court aristocracy, and the blurring of lines between the Buddhist institutional elite and court aristocracy only became more pronounced over time. The temple of Kōfukuji was conceived to function as the Fujiwara *ujidera* (氏寺, family temple) and

¹¹³ Adolphson, *Gates of Power*, 11.

ceremonial center to honor the clan's dead, with construction beginning in 714. The temple was the seat of the Hossō sect of Buddhism (Sk. Yogācāra, Consciousness Only) and in the ninth century head abbots were generally scholarly monks appointed to positions within the Imperial Court's Office of Monastic Affairs, backed by the support of their strong Fujiwara courtier patrons.¹¹⁴

During the Heian period, the Fujiwara clan held hegemony over the court as regents. This translated into massive economic gains for Kōfukuji: the clan chieftains frequently donated land to both Kasuga Grand Shrine and the main temple to express gratitude to the buddhas and *kami* for their continued prosperity. They commissioned extravagant and expensive rituals for protection of the Imperial state as displays of their power, again paid for through donations of tracts of land.¹¹⁵ The temple had always been closely connected to Kasuga Grand Shrine, home to the Fujiwara tutelary deity representing the family's ancestry and bloodline, and the most important shrine in Yamato province.¹¹⁶ Kōfukuji's real hold on power in Yamato province began when it started to take over control of the Kasuga Grand Shrine and its resources during the late ninth century. This process of gradual absorption of Kasuga's religious, economic, and political power took place over several centuries, culminating in the construction of the Wakamiya Shrine (若宮) at Kasuga and the first occurrence of its associated festival in 1135. According to Mikael S. Adolphson, the Wakamiya Shrine melded the Fujiwara tutelary deities into a single combinatory "body" that was administered directly by Kōfukuji alone, emphasized by the temple's role in funding and administering the Wakamiya Shrine Festival (若宮おん祭, *Wakamiya On'matsuri*, the festival's current title).¹¹⁷ Having complete authority over Kasuga was key to Kōfukuji's rise as the main political and economic power within Yamato province. By adding Kasuga

¹¹⁴ Adolphson, *Gates of Power*, 50.

¹¹⁵ Grapard, *Protocol of the Gods*, 128.

¹¹⁶ Grapard, *Protocol of the Gods*, 48-51

¹¹⁷ Adolphson, *Gates of Power*, 59.

Grand Shrine to its control, the temple added a sizable amount to its land holdings, revenue streams, spheres of influence, and labor force. As Adolphson notes, shrines brought not just land, but also added manpower, since their associated organizations often encompassed a large populace of service people who could lend military power in case of conflicts.¹¹⁸

Incorporating Kasuga Grand Shrine into the temple complex was legitimated ideologically by the *honji suijaku* paradigm: as detailed in chapter 2, that the Buddhist deities are the original and abiding essence of enlightenment, and the *kami*, the indigenous gods or spirits of Japan who reside within all things, are the manifest traces of those Buddhist deities in this world.¹¹⁹ Kōfukuji was ideologically authorized to administer the shrine and its rituals, and,

Through these process the Kasuga-Kōfukuji multiplex became a major ceremonial center that controlled the province of Yamato as if it were a possession of the Fujiwara house under the tutelage or spiritual protection of Kasuga *daimyōjin*. The province thus became a quasi-theocracy, a ‘sacred-land’ (*shinkoku*) that was symbolized by the sacred city of Nara, itself administered by aristocratic clerics who believed that society functioned in the way which the political and religious domain they had created was supposed to function.¹²⁰

Adding Kasuga to its holdings also radically increased the number of Kōfukuji’s lay believers. This was a diverse population that was not limited to regional worshippers of the shrine’s principle *kami*, Kasuga Daimyōjin (春日大明神), but also included two distinct groups associated with shrines in the premodern era. The first were *jinnin* (神人): the labors, artisans, and administrative personnel required for the daily running and maintenance of not only the shrines themselves but also lands under institutional control. The second were *kokumin*: regionally powerful families of Yamato province who held considerable economic wealth and influence, and frequently engaged in military affairs. Grapard delineates *kokumin* (国民, which he glosses as “provincials”) as clans who lived on and administered the

¹¹⁸ Adolphson, *Gates of Power*, 61.

¹¹⁹ Teewen and Rambelli, “Introduction,” 4-7.

¹²⁰ Grapard, *Protocol of the Gods*, 107.

Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex's estates and other landholdings, and who aligned themselves more closely with shrines than temples.¹²¹

Kokumin played a large role in shrine affairs through direct patronage of religious rituals, building projects, and as supervisors of shrine lands.¹²² One of the key developments in securing further support from the populace of Yamato for Kasuga Grand Shrine was the aforementioned Wakamiya Shrine festival and its associated rituals. This display of religious and secular capital by the temple complex served to further promote the cult of Kasuga Daimyōjin throughout the province by directly offering opportunities for employment to *jinnin*, as well as providing inroads of negotiation between monastic administrators at Kōfukuji and power bases in the *kokumin*, the primary military power within of Yamato.¹²³ The result was over time the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex gained considerable military strength to back up its rising financial gains.

The acquisition of Kasuga Grand Shrine and control of its deity served another purpose: Kasuga Daimyōjin could be incorporated into the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex's military force. The divinity was named protector of all Yamato; and as Kōfukuji was the protector of Kasuga, they were logically the rightful owners of Yamato province. Adolphson terms this as the “divine threat from Kasuga,” wielded in conjunction with attacks on rival shrines, temples, and land holdings by warriors and warrior-monks aligned with Kōfukuji.¹²⁴ Thus, as a result of the temple's association with Kasuga, the temple complex was able to gain vast tracts of land, prompting the courtier Taira no Nobunori (平信範, 1112-1187) to comment in 1158: “The province of Yamato has become the possession of the Kasuga Shrine and of the Kōfukuji; not one single square foot of public fields is left in the province.”¹²⁵

¹²¹ Grapard, *Protocols of the Gods*, 99.

¹²² Adolphson, *Gates of Power*, 52-3.

¹²³ Izumiya, *Kōfukuji*, 161-3.

¹²⁴ Adolphson, *Gates of Power*, 59-60.

¹²⁵ Recorded in his diary *Heihanki* (兵範記). As cited in Grapard, *Protocols of the Gods*, 129.

This allowed the monastic order to continue to prosper at Kōfukuji even as the Fujiwara family who founded it began to fade in power during the Insei era (院政, 1086-1185).¹²⁶ In fact, the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex's dominance in Yamato was so complete that the Kamakura and early Ashikaga shoguns designated it *shugo* (守護), or military governor, of the province.¹²⁷

The relationship between the warriors and the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex would become the defining characteristic for the complex in the medieval era, especially in the fifteenth century. Unlike Zeami, who was well known for composing warrior plays that appealed to warrior patrons such as Shogun Yoshimitsu, there have been no warrior plays positively attributed to Zenchiku, who appears to have focused instead on dramatic works about *kami* and aristocratic women. Zenchiku was, of course, familiar with the influential role played by the warrior clans in Muromachi society; not only in the capital, but also the important role they played in Yamato province and in the power struggles within the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex during his lifetime. It is possible that in Zenchiku's case, the warriors are made more conspicuous by their complete absence in his corpus of known work, as their role at medieval religious institutions such as the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex was of major political importance. To understand this more clearly, it is critical to delineate the historical factors that would have affected Zenchiku's patronage network: first, the intricate *monzeki* administrative system in place at the upper levels of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex during the Muromachi period; second, the overall fluidity that existed between the *kokumin*

¹²⁶ The Insei era was a period during the late-Heian when emperors would abdicate and take the tonsure, residing at detached temples or palaces (院) in the capital. The hope was that removal from the obligations of the throne via Buddhist vows and physical distance from the court, where the Northern Branch of the Fujiwara held a stranglehold on political control, would give them a chance to rule behind the scenes.

¹²⁷ Grapard, *Protocols of the Gods*, 60.

and the military families of Yamato. Regarding the second factor, we need to understand the terminology of *shuto* when used to refer to members of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex.

As mentioned above, control of the Kasuga Grand Shrine and the physical land of Yamato province were key elements in Kōfukuji's individual rise to political and economic dominance in the political landscape of medieval western Japan. Another critical element was the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex's continued status as a stronghold for the Fujiwara aristocracy and their descendants in the medieval period. This took the form of the *monzeki* system, in which only Buddhist monks of elite aristocratic and/or Imperial lineage were placed into high administrative positions within select Buddhist institutions, two main examples being the Tendai headquarters of Enrajuji and the Hossō sect's Kōfukuji.¹²⁸ This system would play an extremely important role in maintaining aristocratic political control in the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex and also making it one of the most politically connected and financially powerful institutions in Japan. Before continuing further, it is essential to properly define the term *monzeki* for the purposes of this study. *Monzeki* refers to both the physical sub-temples ("noble cloisters") at the larger temple complex that were occupied by aristocratic monks and the title of the aristocratic monk who occupied this hereditary position as the sub-temple's administrator.¹²⁹

The chief administrator of a large Buddhist institution was called the *bettō* (別当, chief administrator, sometimes also translated as chief abbot). The *bettō* at *kenmon* institutions such as the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex wielded exceptional political and economic power during his tenure. Additionally, appointment as *bettō* to a major temple connected with the Imperial court (and later shogunate) was the ultimate sign of prestige in the monastic community. In Kōfukuji's early years, as the Fujiwara family temple, the clan

¹²⁸ Adolphson, *Gates of Power*, 69.

¹²⁹ The term "noble cloisters" is Adolphson's translation of the physical *monzeki* sub-temple buildings themselves. See Adolphson, *Gates of Power*, 71.

chieftains played an important role in selecting the *bettō* from among the general clergy.¹³⁰ To combat incursions into Buddhist institutions by retired Emperors, aristocrats implemented the *monzeki* system to exercise even tighter control over the monastic order. The *monzeki* sub-temples at Kōfukuji were the oldest examples in Japan: the Ichijōin (一乗院) was established in 978, followed by the Daijōin (大乘院) in 1087. The result was a tripartite institution, with administrative power mediated through the *bettō* and the two *monzeki* administrator positions. From the twelfth century onward, only Fujiwara of the *sekkanke* (摂関家, regents) bloodline could inherit the *monzeki* title.¹³¹ As the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex controlled sizable amounts of land, labor, and political clout throughout Yamato, the Fujiwara clan branch families reaped major benefits through the *monzeki* system. One example of this was via Fujiwara manipulation of *bettō* selection at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex. While *bettō* was a potentially powerful and lucrative position at the apex of the temple complex, most monks who filled it only served for a span of a few years. Additionally, selection of the *bettō* was, theoretically, to come from the general clergy members in attendance at the Kondō (金堂, Golden Hall, the main temple of Kōfukuji) with the two Fujiwara *monzeki* as merely potential candidates in the pool. By 1181 the power and influence of *monzeki* and their families made it impossible for non-Fujiwara aristocratic or scholarly monks to have the chance to serve as *bettō*.¹³²

In addition to their role in controlling appointments to *bettō* of the Main Temple, the *monzeki* monks also were nominal heads of the Saikondō (西金堂) and Tōkondō (東金堂), major temples that were large administrative organs at Kōfukuji (and by extension, Kasuga), controlling extensive temple lands, affiliated sub-temples and shrines, manpower, and revenue streams. By the Muromachi period, the *monzeki* head priests of Ichijōin and Daijōin

¹³⁰ Izumiya, *Kōfukuji*, 19.

¹³¹ Grapard, *Protocols of the Gods*, 107.

¹³² Adolphson, *Gates of Power*, 72-3.

controlled and administered most of the city of Nara.¹³³ These *monzeki* head monks also possessed the unique advantage of being both a Buddhist monk and an aristocrat. This entitled them to all the financial and social privileges of being ultra-elite members of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex within Yamato province while also granting them independence from the usual restrictions of monastic life. This was especially the case regarding personal property and land. Additionally, by the medieval era, the two *monzeki* cloistered temples had become separate from Kōfukuji's direct economic and administrative management, giving them a great deal of independent political and financial power.¹³⁴ This political and financial independence caused the two cloistered temples to jockey for power within the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex and Yamato province, resulting in frequent violent confrontations. In 1293 and 1295, competing factions aligned with each *monzeki* clashed over the position of *bettō*, resulting in armed conflicts within Nara City and even Kōfukuji's temple grounds.¹³⁵ In the fourteenth century, competing lines of the Fujiwara involved in the intrigues of the Northern and Southern Courts set off a series of violent pitched battles between the Ichijōin and Daijōin that lasted from 1350 to 1353.¹³⁶

The term *shuto* (衆徒), often used to refer to warrior monks aligned with the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex by Jinson and Kyōkaku in their diaries, was originally a general catchall term for a monastic community regardless of rank or status.¹³⁷ The term *shuto* and the status of the people who occupied it were highly fluid; essentially comprising everyone associated with the temple not involved in religious ritual or scholarship. As Allan Grapard notes regarding the term,

the Kōfukuji temple also gained a large population that was dedicated to their maintenance and to the cult of various divinities as well. Those people were divided

¹³³ Grapard, *Protocols of the Gods*, 108-9.

¹³⁴ Pinnington, *Traces in the Way*, 44.

¹³⁵ Izumiya, *Kōfukuji*, 48.

¹³⁶ Adolphson, *Gates of Power*, 318-9.

¹³⁷ Adolphson, *Teeth and Claws of the Buddha*, 59.

into three groups. First were the *gakuryō*, who were scholarly monks not issued from aristocratic blood. Below them were the *dōshū*, “hall men,” a term that originally referred to the residents of the Western and Eastern Golden Halls, and finally, the *shuto*, a term that defies translation but refers to a group or class of people related to specific temples via those temples’ land possessions, of which they were caretakers. The *shuto* might have been the original owners or caretakers of plots of land that at some point were offered by the imperial lineage to the multiplex, at which time many of them moved to the Kōfukuji and slowly gained a position of authority there. These *shuto* bore arms but wore monastic garb and lived in quarters around the various temples with which they were affiliated.¹³⁸

Due to the power of Kōfukuji, entry into the Kōfukuji *shuto* became the primary means of advancement for the *kokumin* and other warrior groups in Yamato during the Kamakura and Muromachi periods. Eventually all the major warrior families of the province had family members who were associated with the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex.¹³⁹ There were sharp distinctions, however, between scholarly monks who served within the temple and warriors who were part of the *shuto*.¹⁴⁰ By the twelfth century many warriors had taken lay orders and had begun wearing monk cowls and shaving their heads, a practice that would continue into the fifteenth century.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, when reading Jinson and Kyōkaku’s diaries especially, the term *shuto* is almost always used in connection with Yamato’s *kokumin*, rather than the general Buddhist clergy of Kōfukuji or *kami* worship ritual specialists serving at Kasuga.

These critical elements of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex’s political, economic, and social control of Yamato province were in place by the fifteenth century and comprised the field of power Zenchiku needed to navigate to secure the survival of himself, his family, and his troupe. The temple-shrine complex owned almost all the land in the province and generated a great deal of revenue from it. Second, it had close connections with the aristocracy, local military magnates, and shrine service people who supported the temple-

¹³⁸ Grapard, *Protocols of the Gods*, 98-9.

¹³⁹ Izumiya, *Kōfukuji*, 164.

¹⁴⁰ Izumiya, *Kōfukuji*, 61.

¹⁴¹ Izumiya, *Kōfukuji*, 124.

shrine complex in a variety of ways. Third, its administration was organized via the *monzeki* system, keeping wealth and power inside Fujiwara lineages and preventing interference from other members of the *kenmon* system: rival aristocratic families, non-noble members of the Buddhist clergy, and warrior clans. For a Noh troupe leader like Zenchiku, finding a patronage inroad into this vast and complicated network was critical and relied upon skillful negotiation. One of the major events contemporaneous to his life was the Daijōin political dispute, which may have played an important role in his relationship with the aristocratic cloistered *monzeki* of the temple complex, Jinson and Kyōgaku.

Section 2: The Daijōin Political Dispute

Succession Disputes in Medieval Japan

Succession disputes were a driving factor behind a great deal of the political turmoil during the late Muromachi period, directly affecting the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex and Yamato province. Matters of succession among the shogunate and warrior houses were always a delicate matter, contingent on a lord's heavily armed retainers agreeing with his choice of a successor. This was complicated by the fact that succession in medieval Japanese warrior households was not necessarily based on primogeniture. A first-born son by a principle consort could be forced out by half-brothers, adopted brothers, or even uncles. The system was devised to ensure that the household would continue under the strongest possible leadership, but equally guaranteed the formation of factions.¹⁴² The largest and most violent succession dispute in the medieval era involved the Ashikaga shogunate, resulting in the Ōnin War (応仁の乱, 1467-1477), ten years of conflict that devastated the city of Kyōto and the surrounding provinces. One should note that the very nature of succession disputes put

¹⁴² Berry, *Culture of Civil War in Kyoto*, 16-7.

them outside of the established norms of the medieval Japanese legal system. As Mary Elizabeth Berry states,

Certain matters in medieval Japanese society, preeminently the matter of succession, stood outside the universe of statute, precedent, contract, and executive right—outside, that is, the universe of conventional expectation and duress that make the rule of law intelligible. By their very nature, succession decisions resisted the workings of law, however broadly conceived, for no review of evidence, no consultation of statutes, no invocation of past practice, no exploration of the natural order could settle them unequivocally.¹⁴³

Conflicts over succession, especially to high-ranking shogunate or clan titles, were especially problematic in that they frequently propagated bitter personal grudges between power magnates, almost always leading to direct armed conflict. This type of “private battle” to resolve “obvious grievance” was viewed as an inevitable fact by the shogunate.¹⁴⁴ Clearly, succession disputes were capable of fundamentally altering entire political, social, and economic landscapes through warfare and dramatic upheaval of local conditions.

Furthermore, according to Berry, the private, grudge-based nature of these succession disputes contributed to their violent nature, which often symbolically resembled criminal punishment aimed at exacting retribution: decapitation of the enemy, burning of their private property, taking a rival’s female family members as concubines, and so on.¹⁴⁵ The Daijōin political dispute was simultaneously typical and unique. It was typical in that it involved conflict over titles and their associated lands, in this case control of the Daijōin *monzeki* cloister of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex with its associated administrative powers, lands, and revenue streams. It was also typical in that it involved armed conflict between rival warrior factions in support of their respective candidates: the deposed previous *monzeki* Kyōkaku and his newly appointed successor Jinson. However, as this political dispute occurred within the internal organization of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex, one of the major

¹⁴³ Berry, *Culture of Civil War*, 23.

¹⁴⁴ Berry, *Culture of Civil War*, 24.

¹⁴⁵ Berry, *Culture of Civil War*, 9 and 32.

kenmon temples of western Japan, its resolution differed from standard succession disputes in medieval warrior houses in important ways. These differences are especially crucial to identifying Zenchiku's location of possible patronage sources within the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex for himself and his troupe, and may also shed light on the formation of his own soteriological belief systems around this time. It is therefore critical to identify the individual stakeholders in the Daijō-in political dispute, track the events of the conflict, and analyze its aftereffects.

Main Participants and Events of the Political Dispute

Kyōkaku¹⁴⁶ was born in 1395 into the *sekkane* (Imperial Regent) bloodline of the Kujō lineage (九条) of the Fujiwara. His father, Kujō Tsunenori (九条経教, 1331-1400), had served as *kanpaku* (関白, regent) at the Imperial Court from 1358-1361,¹⁴⁷ while his older brother Kujō Mitsuie (九条満家, 1394-1499) also held the position from 1418-1424.¹⁴⁸ Perhaps due to his young age at the time of his father's death (Kyōkaku was five years-old when Tsunenori passed away at sixty-nine), the Kujō selected Kyōkaku to represent their family's interests in the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex and Yamato province. He entered the Kōfukuji cloister of Daijōin in 1408 at the age of thirteen, and officially assumed his hereditary position as *monzeki* in 1412. Young but politically capable, he gained the coveted chief administrator position of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex *bettō* in 1431 at the age of

¹⁴⁶ I have found the following three potential pronunciations for 経覚, the characters for Kyōkaku's name: *Kyōkaku*, *Kyōgaku*, and *Gyōkaku*. The romanization for the Takahashi Ryūzō and Koizumi Yoshiaki edited volumes of Kyōkaku's *kanbun* diaries, published by Zoku Gunsho Ruijū Kanseikai (Tokyo: 1967-71), is *Kyōgaku shiyōshō*. However, in his study *Kōfukuji* (1997), Izumiya Yasuo provides *furigana* using the *Kyōkaku* pronunciation (61.) Muromachi/Sengoku era historian Tanaka Keiji has written more currently on Nara history during Kyōkaku's era (see Bibliography) but does not provide pronunciation information. As Izumiya's scholarship is the most recent with information relating to potential pronunciation of 経覚, I have utilized *Kyōkaku* for this study.

¹⁴⁷ Entry for Kujō Tsunenori, *Kokushi Daijiten*, Online Edition, Yoshikawa kobunkan, Inc.

¹⁴⁸ Entry for Kujō Mitsuie, *Nihon Jinmei Daijiten*, Online Edition, Kodansha.

thirty-one. His fortunes took a radical turn for the worse in 1438, when shogun Ashikaga Yoshinori removed him from his position as Daijō-in *monzeki*, with Jinson succeeding to that position in 1441.¹⁴⁹ The reason for Yoshinori's antagonism toward Kyōkaku is unknown, and the surviving text of his official diary, *Kyōgaku shiyōshō* (経覚私要鈔), is missing the years leading up to and including his removal from office.¹⁵⁰ Jinson's official diary, the *Daijōin nikki mokuroku* (大乘院日記目録), later collected in the chronicle of the sub-temple's history, the *Daijōin jisha zōjiki* (大乘院寺社雑事記), also does not make mention of the incident.¹⁵¹ It is important to note that premodern *kanbun* (漢文, literary Chinese written in Japan) diaries of high-ranking Buddhist administrators such as Jinson served the public purpose of chronicling the daily activities of the *monzeki* himself: his role in important rituals, financial transactions pertaining to his estates and other land holdings, events in Yamato province and Nara City, and other noteworthy matters. As open records of public events at important political and religious institutions such as the Daijōin, they would be carefully written and edited for prosperity. Avoiding direct comment on a delicate political situation relating to actions undertaken by the shogun against one of the highest-ranking members of his own temple may speak loudly enough. Jinson's father, Ichijō Kanera (1402-1481), was one of the most prominent statesmen of the day. Like Kujō Tsunenori, he was an imperial regent of Fujiwara descent, albeit from a different line. Although court intrigues still existed among the weakened court aristocracy in the late Muromachi, I would argue that lingering

¹⁴⁹ Tanaka, "Chūsei-goki Kinai kokujinsō no dōkō to kashindan hensei," 80.

¹⁵⁰ Like many contemporaneous texts of its kind, the *Kyōgaku shiyōshō* is not a chronologically consistent record of events. The chronology for entries contemporaneous to Kyōkaku's 1438 deposition from his position as Daijōin *monzeki* are as follows: 1436 (Eikyō 8), from the beginning of the tenth month through the end of the twelfth month (*Kyōgaku shiyōshō*, vol. 1, 27-60); the text then jumps to 1443 (Kakitsu 3), covering the beginning of the fourth month through the end of the sixth month. Takahashi and Koizumi, *Kyōgaku shiyōshō*, vol. 1, 61-95.

¹⁵¹ Entries for 1438 (Eikyō 10). Takeuchi, *Daijōin nikki mokuroku*, 326a-7a.

court rivalries between the Kujō and Ichijō families were unlikely to have been responsible for Kyōkaku's removal from the Daijōin.

Instead, Ashikaga Yoshinori's personal character is the most likely explanation for Kyōkaku's mysterious ousting from office. The historian Tanaka Keiji has characterized Yoshinori's shogunate as a "reign of terror;"¹⁵² the literary historian Steven Carter writes that Yoshinori's main methods of rule were "intrigue and murder."¹⁵³ As shogun, he was obsessively involved in the matter of succession at every level within his domains, even interfering in the succession rights of acting troupes under his patronage. As mentioned in chapter 1, Yoshinori may have exiled Zeami to Sado Island for the final years of his life over a disagreement about the naming of the *tayū* (official head) of the Kanze Noh troupe.¹⁵⁴ If Yoshinori was willing to take such harsh action over a minor matter such as a Noh troupe's succession rights, it is conceivable that he may have taken a similar hardline stance toward Kyōkaku.

As noted above, the powerful and coveted position of *bettō* at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex was generally dominated by Daijō-in and Ichijō-in *monzeki*. An examination of the aristocratic appointment record *Dokushi biyō* (讀史備要) reveals noticeable shifts in the pattern of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex *bettō* assignments involving *monzeki* during the medieval period. During the late Kamakura and early Muromachi periods, *monzeki* of both cloisters served multiple tenures as *bettō*, sometimes five or six times.¹⁵⁵ Ashikaga interference in the affairs of Buddhist institutions as the Muromachi period progressed weakened this type of dominance by noble cloisters, especially in the case of the *monzeki*

¹⁵² Translation of *kyōfu seiji* as found in Tanaka's "Chūsei-goki Kinai kokujinsō no dōkō to kashindan hensei," 80 and "Izumi-koku jōshugōdai Udaka-shi to Kōfukuji kanpu shuto tōryō Furuichi-shi," 255.

¹⁵³ Carter, *Regent Redux*, 64.

¹⁵⁴ Hare, *Zeami's Style*, 32-6.

¹⁵⁵ Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo, *Dokushi biyō*, 977.

position at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex.¹⁵⁶ However, Kyōkaku's earlier tenure as *monzeki* was an exception to Ashikaga manipulation of Kōfukuji-Kasuga appointments. His first tenure as *bettō* in 1426 was quickly followed by a second term in 1431.¹⁵⁷ Given historians' assessment of Yoshinori's erratic and paranoid rule as shogun, he may have perceived Kyōkaku's ambitions and consolidation of power within the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex through this second *bettō* tenure as a threat to shogunal control within Yamato. However, ultimately, lack of textual evidence makes the reason for hostility between the two men difficult to know for sure.

After Yoshinori's assassination while watching a *sarugaku* performance in 1441, Kyōkaku began gathering factions to support his political maneuvering to regain his position at the Daijō-in cloister and ultimately the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex. Tanaka Keiji cites the unpopular shogun's death as the direct impetus for Kyōkaku's campaign to seek restoration of his status.¹⁵⁸ He had been sequestered at the Kujō family temple of Aniji on the outskirts of Nara city biding his time. We can see the plot begin to take shape in these diary entries in the *Kyōgaku shiyōshō*:

Third year of Kakitsu [1443], Fourth Month, Sixteenth Day.

Item: As to matters of jurisdiction of clan temples [in Soekami-gun¹⁵⁹], [I] went to the fortress¹⁶⁰ to discuss [matters] together with Furuichi [Insei.] According to Furuichi's letter, plans for the clan temple came from Mt. Ki, [and] the sutra repository is to begin construction.¹⁶¹

Twenty-Seventh Day.

Item: As to matters of Furuichi and [his] fortress, it is exceptional in its might. It gathers military strength.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ Adolphson, *Gates of Power*, 338-40.

¹⁵⁷ Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo, *Dokushi biyō*, 977.

¹⁵⁸ Tanaka, "Chūsei-goki Kinai kokujinsō no dōkō to kashindan hensei," 80.

¹⁵⁹ *Gun* classification of a landholding in northeast Yamato province. Donated to Kasuga Grand Shrine in 1021 by Emperor Go-Ichijō. Nagashima, in *Yamato shiryō, jō*, Online Edition.

¹⁶⁰ The Furuichi clan base.

¹⁶¹ All translations mine unless otherwise indicated. Takahashi and Koizumi, *Kyōgaku shiyōshō*, vol. 1, 72.

¹⁶² Takahashi and Koizumi, *Kyōgaku shiyōshō*, vol. 1, 72.

These entries are the first mention in Kyōkaku's diary of Furuichi Insen (古市胤仙, birth unknown-1453), the head of the Furuichi warrior family. They provide us with a first-hand account of Kyōkaku's relationship with this *kokumin* clan: the economics of land and property management combined with military force. The Furuichi were typical of *kokumin* families who became *shuto* of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex to strengthen their political and financial clout in Nara City and Yamato province through alliance with the religious complex. The Furuichi were hereditarily associated with the *monzeki* of Daijōin, and Insen himself had especially deep personal ties with Kyōkaku, so it was natural for the clan chief to aid the aristocratic monk during the latter's exile, and signal his continuing loyalty.¹⁶³ However, duty was not Insen's only concern: he saw support of Kyōkaku's reinstatement as his means of establishing the Furuichi clan as the dominant *kokumin* warrior family in Nara province and also main *shuto* of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex's holdings in Nara City. As can be seen in the diary quotations above, the ties with Kyōkaku were mutually beneficial: Kyōkaku had the economic resources to assist the clan's personal property management plus needed political connections, while the Furuichi possessed the military strength necessary for the aristocratic monk to regain what he had lost. Insen's ultimate goal was to gain possession of the prestigious appointments of *Nara-chū zatsumu kendan shiki* (奈良中雑務検断識, Nara City Official Police Force) and *kanpu shuto* (官符衆徒, Official Clergy; officials who attended to Kōfukuji lands and affairs). This meant opposing the Tsutsui family of warrior *shuto*, who operated as the official shogunate appointed *shugo* (military governors) of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex during this era.¹⁶⁴ Tanaka Keiji argues that the Furuichi clan took Kyōkaku

¹⁶³ Tanaka, "Chūsei-goki Kinai kokujinsō no dōkō to kashindan hensei," 81.

¹⁶⁴ Izumiya, *Kōfukuji*, 166-8.

as the “symbol” of their conflict with the Tsutsui for their own ambitions and would remain closely attached to him for the rest of his life.¹⁶⁵

While the Furuichi warrior family provided Kyōkaku with the necessary military support at the local level to reclaim his former position, he needed still higher level political influence as well. This came in the form of Hatakeyama Mochikuni, the shogunate’s military governor for Yamato province. Kyōkaku would have connected with Hatakeyama through familial channels at the Imperial court in Kyōto.¹⁶⁶ After Yoshinori’s death in 1441, Hatakeyama supported Kyōkaku’s cause by petitioning the shogunate in Kyōto on the aristocratic monk’s behalf. Hatakeyama was successful in this endeavor and Kyōkaku was granted an audience with child shogun Ashikaga Yoshikatsu (足利義勝, 1434–1443) on the twenty-first day of the Sixth month of 1443; his prior offense was forgiven.¹⁶⁷

Kyōkaku’s connection with Hatakeyama and renewed acceptance by the shogunate in Kyōto secured his status as *monzeki* for two key reasons: first, it legitimized his claims for reentering the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex; and second, it gave him a means of providing financial compensation to the Furuichi for aligning with his cause. Through the efforts of Hatakeyama as an intermediary, in 1443 Kyōkaku granted the titles of Nara City Official Police Force and Official Clergy to the Furuichi clan. The event is documented in Jinson’s official diary:

Third year of Kakitsu [1443], Ninth Month, seventeenth day.
Official Police Force of Nara City: Koizimu Shigehiro, Toyota Raiei, Furuichi Insen. All three of these men were appointed through the auspices of the former Head Abbot [Kyōkaku] and His Excellency [the shogun]; the realm of the shrines and the temples is not well, is not well.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Tanaka, “Chūsei-goki Kinai kokujinsō no dōkō to kashindan hensei,” 80.

¹⁶⁶ Tanaka, “Izumi-koku jōshugōdai Udaka-shi to Kōfukuji kanpu shuto tōryō Furuichi-shi,” 256.

¹⁶⁷ Takahashi and Koizumi, *Kyōgaku shiyōshō*, vol. 1, p. 88.

¹⁶⁸ Takeuchi, *Daijōin nikki mokuroku*, vol. 1, 335b.

Jinson's concern was due to that in 1443, just prior to their assumption of the prestigious title Nara City Official Police Force along with its associated privileges, the Furuichi had attacked the Tsutsui family, the main security force for Kōfukuji at the time. This warfare in Nara City and on the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex lands culminated in Kyōkaku's reinstatement as *monzeki*, this time at Ichijōin. To properly assess the impact the fighting related to the Daijōin political dispute had on Kōfukuji's internal and external political power in Nara City and Yamato province, it is necessary to shift to Jinson's perspective of the conflict.

As stated above, Jinson was the youngest son of Ichijō Kanera, and like Kyōkaku was groomed to enter Kōfukuji from an early age. The Ichijō household traced its lineage back to the Northern branch of the Fujiwara family, with Jinson's father Kanera epitomizing the literary and political heritage of their past.¹⁶⁹ Jinson entered Kōfukuji as a young monk and took up residence at the Daijōin in 1438, but did not formally assume the position of Daijōin *monzeki* until 1440.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, he was only appointed *bettō* once in 1456.¹⁷¹ Kyōkaku, by contrast, would serve two additional tenures in 1461 and 1469 following his 1450 reinstatement.¹⁷² Jinson's youth and inexperience versus the politically tested Kyōkaku cannot be over-emphasized. Only thirteen or fourteen years old when his position came under attack and without the political experience needed to contend with these situations, the disorder caused by the Daijōin political dispute would have impacted Jinson greatly, as it had a direct impact on the political landscape of the Kōfukuji temple.

1443 was a critical year for the Daijōin political dispute. As noted in Kyōkaku's diary, the Furuichi had been amassing troops at their castle for an attack. Now that Kyōkaku had been officially pardoned by the shogunate and had formed a close alliance with Hatakeyama Mochikuni, a cooling of hostilities and direct mediation with Jinson and the Kōfukuji-Kasuga

¹⁶⁹ Nagashima, *Ichijō Kanera*, 17-19.

¹⁷⁰ Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo, *Dokushi biyō*, 976.

¹⁷¹ Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo, *Dokushi biyō*, 978.

¹⁷² Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo, *Dokushi biyō*, 978-9.

complex would seem like the logical choice. In fact, the exact opposite occurred, and some of the fiercest fighting of the conflict took place inside Nara City itself, as chronicled in Jinson's diary. The combatants included:

Kyōkaku-Furuichi faction:

1. Furuichi Insen: Head of Furuichi clan.
2. Toyota Raiei (豊田頼英, 1403-1490): Warrior attached to Kōfukuji lay clergy.
3. Ido (井戸, dates unknown): Warrior family drawn into the fighting.

Tsutsui family:

1. Jōshinin Kōsen (成身院光宣, 1390-1470). Warrior and ordained Kōfukuji monk. Key member of the Tsutsui clan.
2. Jikken (dates unknown): Tsutsui warrior and ordained monk.
3. Other Tsutsui warriors.

According to Jinson's diary, the events unfolded as follows:

Third year of Kakitsu [1443], Ninth Month, sixteenth day.

Today, Toyota Raiei and his son advanced up toward Nara, while Kōsen advanced down toward Mirokuji. They went past the Kōrinin, the Daijōin and the Jakuji storehouse, going through the area around those buildings. Then they passed through the Kōfukuji Main Temple Gate. Furuichi went by means of the temple forest, passing through a burned-out building. Toyota went with Ido and others. Jikken came with a multitude of soldiers, with Tsutsui arriving at Third Avenue, and then they all fought with each other. Jikken retreated and Kōsen fell back to Tsutsui Hall, where he required five latches to bar the door shut [and keep the enemy out.] As a sign of their victory, the seven instigating men were all gathered in the proximity of the Kōfukuji Main Temple Gate. For the sake of the Temple, Kōsen charged the seven men with committing crimes [against it.]¹⁷³

What started as a personally motivated attempt by Kyōkaku to be reinstated at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex, appears to have been hijacked to further the interests of local military families, the Furuichi and the Tsutsui, who were competing for control of the streets of Nara City and the Kōfukuji temple. It is important to note that all these armed conflicts within and around Nara City and the Kōfukuji's grounds took place after Kyōkaku's shogunal pardon. While on the surface, this and subsequent Furuichi military victories may appear to be a normalization of political affairs at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex, Izumiya Yasuo argues that the Furuichi clan's support of Kyōkaku left Jinson in a politically

¹⁷³ Takeuchi, *Daijōin nikki mokuroku*, 335ab.

disadvantaged position for the rest of his life. As mentioned above, the Furuichi were traditionally *shuto* of Daijōin and expected to be loyal to its *monzeki*. Instead, they now firmly stood behind Kyōkaku at the Ichijōin, leaving the teen-aged Jinson with diminished overall support to compete against the political veteran Kyōkaku. This exerted considerable influence on Kyōkaku being named *bettō* twice after he was reinstated in 1450, versus only once for Jinson's entire career.¹⁷⁴ The Furuichi alliance with a Kyōkaku-controlled Ichijōin tipped the balance of power within the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex strongly to one side.

The specific nature of the Daijōin political dispute features key points enumerated in Berry's argument on the nature of medieval succession disputes in warrior households, while differing in certain ways. This is important as it demonstrates how this religious institution dispute closely followed many similar socio-historic patterns to those found in warrior household conflicts, yet varied in distinct ways that play a critical role in shaping its outcome. Like warrior-clan succession disputes, the source of conflict was interference in hereditary succession, with both sides having legitimate claims. However, in the Daijōin political dispute, this was caused by the shogun himself arbitrarily deposing a *monzeki* and replacing him with another, rather than an internal struggle between rival factions within a warrior family. The political dispute examined in this study also departed from typical warrior conflicts in that it combined *both* courtly and military intercession, occupying a grey area within Muromachi period political maneuvering. By strategically utilizing the legal agency of Hatakeyama to communicate with and secure his pardon from the shogunate in Kyōto, Kyōkaku was operating well within the established boundaries of law, administration, and precedent. The subsequent armed conflicts between the Furuichi clan (backing Kyōkaku) and the Tsutsui clan (aligned with Jinson) with several associated factions choosing sides, bear significant resemblance to "private battles" fought to settle a grudge, but in other ways

¹⁷⁴ Izumiya, *Kōfukuji*, 170.

operated outside the established norm. Fighting within sacred temple grounds over political matters demonstrates this violation of established social and religious regulations of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex's authority. Not once in his diaries does Kyōkaku seek audience with Jinson to discuss the situation, nor do the Main Clergy at Kōfukuji seem to be reviewing options for resolving the matter. Instead the matter is only finally resolved in 1450 when the Furuichi defeated the Tsutsui chieftains in a final battle, further emphasizing the possibility of personal grudge and retribution as a motivating factor in the conflict. The defeat of the Tsutsui clan allowed Kyōkaku to be fully reinstated at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex as an aristocratic monk of highest rank, and to also now be re-installed as *monzeki*, now of the Ichijōin, with Jinson remaining in his position at the Daijōin.¹⁷⁵ The Furuichi clan's association with Kyōkaku up until his death in 1473 cemented their position at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex and Nara City as new regional power brokers, signifying a shift in the balance of power away from the Daijōin and Ichijōin *monzeki* cloisters themselves toward the *kokumin* and *kokujin* families who support them.

Despite these similarities, there were characteristics that stand in marked contrast to the typical results of warrior succession disputes: entire family bloodlines were not extinguished in bloody purges and no major Daijōin, Kōfukuji, or Kasuga properties were looted or burnt to the ground.¹⁷⁶ In fact, both Kyōkaku and rival Jinson lived to ripe old ages in comfort. Perhaps Kyōkaku's personal hostility extended only as far as reclamation of his personal political power and wealth: as an aristocratic monk, he would have felt that decapitating Jinson was unnecessary, and might very well set a bad precedent.

¹⁷⁵ Tanaka, "Izumi-koku jōshugōdai Udaka-shi to Kōfukuji kanpu shuto tōryō Furuichi-shi," 259.

¹⁷⁶ Berry, *Culture of Civil War*, 74-5.

Section 3: Zenchiku and the Monzeki of Kōfukuji

As a *sarugaku* actor, Konparu Zenchiku occupied an ambiguous social space in the mid-fifteenth century. Although actors were technically of a lower social class than most commoners, he enjoyed a great degree of interaction with the Muromachi social elite such as Buddhist aristocrats like Kyōkaku and Jinson, with the aim of securing continued financial support for the Konparu troupe through men of such powerful influence. With the economic survival of his troupe as a top priority, he must have been careful to take note of the locus of political and military power at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex. As I will explore in this section, his ability to successfully navigate the delicate and frequently conflict-ridden conditions at the religious complex may have played as large a role in his success as his skill at appealing to the tastes of the elite Buddhist clergy of this institution. Furthermore, the fighting and violence within the religious location of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex witnessed by Zenchiku during the Daijōin political dispute may have had a substantial impact on his understanding of unstable or ambiguous sacred spaces and their soteriological potential within his Third Category plays featuring female-spirits.

As noted in chapter 1, Zenchiku was the hereditary leader and principle actor of the Konparu troupe, one of the four *sarugaku* families of Yamato province. The Konparu were particularly associated with performances of the *Okina sarugaku* tradition at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex, exemplified by the *Shikisanban* ritual, featuring the *okina* (felicitous old man) character who supernaturally blesses the realm with his dance.¹⁷⁷ As Noel Pinnington has argued, the importance of the ritual and of the actor playing the *okina* role was critical:

Shikisanban was also emblematic of a conservative stance taken in relation to *sarugaku* patronage in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The four Yamato troupes were organized by the Kōfukuji temple to carry out a calendar of performances. The most important of these was the performance of *Shikisanban* at particular sites—before the Kasuga Shrine, at the Tōnomine complex, and at the Wakamiya Shrine, an

¹⁷⁷ Pinnington, *Traces in the Way*, 203-4. This ritual is preserved in abbreviated form in the current Noh play *Okina*.

extension of the Kasuga complex.... *Sarugaku* troupes had a number of performance genres in which they specialized, of which the Noh play was just one that assumed great importance from the late fourteenth century onwards. *Shikisanban* in Nara was reserved to troupe elders and its main role, *Okina*, was the responsibility of the leader of the troupe, the *osa*, whose duties included liaison between the Kōfukuji authorities and other actors, and who received the larger share of the troupe's income.¹⁷⁸

Pinnington has argued that Zenchiku constructed Konparu "traditions" around the *okina sarugaku* tradition that focused on the *Shikisanban* ritual and engaged in intellectual discourse with elite literati of his day with the express intent of creating a cerebral and spiritually complex theatre that would secure the patronage of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex's highest clergy by appealing to their aristocratic sensibilities and elite educations.

¹⁷⁹ Through his main patron, Jinson, Zenchiku would have been introduced to Ichijō Kanera, leading Reizei (冷泉) poet Shōtetsu (正徹, 1381-1459), and other members of the literary and court elite. Under the tutelage of aristocratic literati such as these, Zenchiku developed his signature style of intellectual drama, and supported that style of *sarugaku* with treatises such as *Rokurin ichirō*, *Meishukushū*, and others.¹⁸⁰ Pinnington also argues that Zenchiku's decision to secure patronage at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex was a pragmatic decision: the capital during and after Ashikaga Yoshinori's reign as shogun was an unstable place and pursuing financial security for the Konparu in his home province was a safer option.¹⁸¹ Indeed, as discussed above, Zenchiku was very familiar with the negative example of his father-in-law Zeami, who fell victim to Yoshinori's erratic nature and was exiled to Sado Island.¹⁸²

I would argue that there are three main reasons Pinnington's argument paints an incomplete picture of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex's field of power in the mid-fifteenth century. First, it does not address Zenchiku's engagement with Kyōkaku, one of the most

¹⁷⁸ Pinnington, *Traces in the Way*, 205-6.

¹⁷⁹ Pinnington, *Traces in the Way*, 10.

¹⁸⁰ Pinnington, *Traces in the Way*, 12-3.

¹⁸¹ Pinnington, *Traces in the Way*, 251.

¹⁸² Hare, *Zeami's Style*, 32-6.

important figures at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex at that time, at a significant level. Secondly, it focuses on only one aspect of Zenchiku's works, the contents of the treatises. Third, there is an over-emphasis on intellectual discourse as the deciding factor in Zenchiku's patronage decisions rather than the political forces within the field of power as seen in the extant historical record. To better define this field, I will present a compressed timeline of Zenchiku's activities at Kōfukuji focusing on his early interactions with Kyōkaku and Jinson.¹⁸³ I will provide commentary on these events based on how the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex field of power, and Zenchiku's position-taking within it, was informed by the historical events surrounding the Daijōin political dispute. A clearer and more balanced understanding of Zenchiku's patronage decisions will be gained from this exercise. I will also offer new possibilities for further exploration into Zenchiku's personal history and interpersonal relationships, along with an analysis of how to understand the effects of the Daijōin political dispute in the overall soteriological trajectory of Zenchiku's Third Category plays.

Zenchiku Patronage Timeline

1) 1432, Second Month. Zenchiku performs at the Daijōin.¹⁸⁴

Comments: Kyōkaku was the *monzeki* of the Daijōin at this time and also the current *bettō* of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex. Therefore, at the relatively young age of twenty-eight Zenchiku was performing for the most powerful man in Yamato province. This may have been his first contact with Kyōkaku, who was thirty-eight at the time. This indicates that

¹⁸³ A timeline of Zenchiku's life detailed in Appendix 1 of Paul Atkins's *Revealed Identity* (241-245) was used to find the diary entries translated here. Atkins bases his timeline primarily on the following sources: Omote and Itō, *Konparu kodensho shūsei*, 56-62 and 647-8; Nose, *Nōgaku genryū kō*, 470-7; and Omote and Amano, *Nōgaku no rekishi*, 384-7.

¹⁸⁴ Atkins cites *Daijōin Jinson gechijō* as cited in Nose, *Nōgaku genryū kō*, 472. Atkins, *Revealed Identity*, 242.

initial contact between the two men was relatively early on. While it is impossible to know the full extent of the possible interaction, it is important to note that it occurred.

2) 1433, Third Month. Zeami exiled to Sado Island. Zenchiku sends him money and cares for his family in his absence.¹⁸⁵

Comments: Zenchiku's association with Zeami was personal and professional. He was the older playwright's son-in-law, also received secret treatises on *sarugaku* from him.¹⁸⁶ Zeami ended up in a situation Zenchiku wanted to avoid: in an unstable patronage relationship with an Ashikaga shogun. Zeami's exile to Sado can be viewed as a powerful negative example that would have underscored for Zenchiku the importance of political stability in the patronage relationship.

3) 1438. From the *Hannyakutsu monjo*:

This year the head of the Konparu has donated a stone lantern to Kasuga Grand Shrine.¹⁸⁷

Comments: Zenchiku's act of donating the stone lantern, an expensive item, displays a concerted financial effort to establish the Konparu as vital figures at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex's center of ritual power in Yamato. This may have been influenced directly by Yoshinori's removal of Kyōkaku as Daijōin *monzeki* in the same year. Zenchiku had already directly witnessed the effects of an unstable patronage relationship in the fate of his father-in-law Zeami. It is possible that Yoshinori's forcing out of Kyōkaku, someone whose hereditary status should have made his security as Daijōin *monzeki* unassailable, may have reinforced for Zenchiku the necessity of diversifying his methods of establishing the Konparu at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex. The stone lantern donation can be read as Zenchiku's symbolic act attempting to position the Konparu as integral members of the Kasuga Grand Shrine's ritual organization in reaction to these political conditions.

¹⁸⁵ Atkins cites Zeami's *Kintōsho* and letters from Sado. Atkins, *Revealed Identity*, 242.

¹⁸⁶ Pinnington, *Traces in the Way*, 83-4.

¹⁸⁷ Atkins cites Omote and Itō, *Konparu kodensho shūsei*, 647.

4) 1440, Third Month, Tenth day. From a currently lost Daijōin record:

Tonight there was torchlight *sarugaku*. Master Konparu Kōtarō of the Enman'i troupe presided.¹⁸⁸

Comments: As noted above, Jinson would formally assume the title of *monzeki* of Daijōin the next year. This is also the first recorded instance of Zenchiku performing for Jinson. Paul Atkins interprets this as the first face-to-face meeting between Zenchiku and Jinson, but there is no guarantee of this from the available textual sources.¹⁸⁹ It is important to note the age difference of the two men: Zenchiku was in his mid-thirties, whereas Jinson was ten years old.¹⁹⁰ Noel Pinnington argues for Jinson as Zenchiku's primary patron, but does it seem likely that Jinson, even given his eminent position, was truly the target audience for Zenchiku's esoteric-influenced treatises and plays?

Tōdaiji monk Shigyoku (志玉, 1384-1468) completed his commentary on *Rokurin ichirō* in 1444, according to the colophon of an Edo period version of the text.¹⁹¹ Shigyōku, a scholarly genius of aristocratic lineage who studied in Ming China for five years, was considered the foremost expert on the multiple schools of Buddhism in the early fifteenth century. The official endorsement of an intellectual mind of his caliber instantly legitimized Zenchiku's phenomenological theories.¹⁹² Additionally, a work of *Rokurin ichirō*'s complexity would have been in development for longer than the four years between his initial meeting with Jinson and the completion of Shigyoku's commentary. Finally, we simply cannot tell if this would or would not have appealed to Jinson's tastes at such a young age or if it could have engaged him in any way. Therefore, let us examine more concrete political examples of Zenchiku securing patronage and influence at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex.

¹⁸⁸ Omote and Itō, *Konparu Kodensho shūsei*, 59a. Omote and Itō indicate the original source was lost, but preserved in another, unnamed record.

¹⁸⁹ Atkins, *Revealed Identity*, 242.

¹⁹⁰ Atkins, *Revealed Identity*, 242

¹⁹¹ Omote and Itō, *Komparu kodensho shūsei*, 73b.

¹⁹² Pinnington, *Traces in the Way*, 56-7.

5) 1451, Second Month, Seventh day. From *Kyōgaku shiyōshō*:

Item: *Sarugaku* Konparu father and son came, [and] I met with them.

(...)

Item: From today, torchlight *sarugaku* will be performed at the Southern Gate.¹⁹³

Comments: This is probably the first meeting of Zenchiku and his son Sōin (宗筠, 1432-1480) with Kyōkaku following his 1450 reinstatement.¹⁹⁴ This is a critical juncture in Zenchiku's life in many ways. First, it would have been imperative for him to hold audience with the newly installed *monzeki* of Ichijōin. As was made clear in section 2, the balance of power at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex had definitively shifted to this cloister with the resolution of the Daijōin political dispute, ending hostilities between the Furuichi and Tsutsui clans. Reintroducing himself and the Konparu, especially his son as troupe successor, to Kyōkaku to secure a solid relationship with the Ichijōin was imperative, perhaps even an issue of personal safety. As a resident of Nara, the pitched battles between the Furuichi and Tsutsui during the conflict may still have been fresh in Zenchiku's mind. Furthermore, the Furuichi now exercised their influence in and around Nara City at will, frequently resorting to violence against their rivals with little fear of legal reprisal from other political or warrior factions within the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex.¹⁹⁵ It would have been critical for Zenchiku to establish himself with Kyōkaku to solidify his position within the religious complex, especially concerning such political and economic matters as administrations of official titles and their associated privileges.

Establishing connections with Kyōkaku may have been the vital link in finally establishing the Konparu as indispensable ritual specialists at the Kasuga Grand Shrine of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex. As noted above, it was the incorporation of Kasuga Grand Shrine that had given Kōfukuji the symbolic capital and spiritual power to exert its political control

¹⁹³ Takahashi and Koizumi, *Kyōgaku shiyōshō*, vol. 2, 229.

¹⁹⁴ Atkins, *Revealed Identity*, 242.

¹⁹⁵ Izumiya, *Kōfukuji*, 172.

over Yamato province. This was facilitated in large part by the mythos of Kasuga Daimyōjin at the shrine, providing important symbolic effects for the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex, as well as being financially remunerative to the overall complex. *Okina sarugaku*, which Zenchiku promoted as the Konparu hereditary specialty, was the most important and sacred *sarugaku* piece performed at Kasuga.¹⁹⁶ On the ninth day of the Second Month, two days after the above entry in the *Kyōgaku shiyōshō*, the Konparu performed at Kasuga Grand Shrine.¹⁹⁷ Given the time frame of these events, it is most likely that coordination for this ritual of the Konparu at Kasuga was conceived before these dates, and that the above meeting with Kyōkaku was a final personal meeting and performance before the larger official Kasuga Grand Shrine ritual. The fact that Zenchiku had now secured a vital patronage position with the shrine is corroborated by the fact that the Konparu were named *gakutō* (学頭, priests with specialized knowledge) of Kasuga Grand Shrine in the same year of 1451.¹⁹⁸

As the seat of political power at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex at the time and given the timing of events immediately after the Daijōin succession dispute, it makes logical sense that it was Kyōkaku who awarded Zenchiku's family the position of *Okina sarugaku* specialists at Kasuga Shrine. Kyōkaku was returning to a position of power with both political momentum and successful military backing. Zenchiku would have re-introduced himself to the veteran politician as someone with the right background and excellent scholarly credentials who could fulfill an important role at the base of Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex's power structure. It may be impossible to fully understand the intended audience Zenchiku wrote *Rokurin ichirō* for, however the importance of his association with Kyōkaku in establishing the Konparu at Kasuga Grand Shrine and the role ritual plays in his oeuvre on a whole is worth reassessing given these historical conditions.

¹⁹⁶ Pinnington, *Traces in the Way*, 22.

¹⁹⁷ Atkins, *Revealed Identity*, 242.

¹⁹⁸ Pinnington, *Traces in the Way*, 57.

Bearing all the above events in mind, it is important to remember that Nara City, as previously mentioned, was considered a sacred city under the protectorate of the Kasuga Daimyōjin and by extension the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex. To have his home religious institution, and the sacred space it directly represented, violated by the violent aggression of warrior factions who were directly aligned with the religious administrator he now relied on for the support of his family may have impacted Zenchiku in deep and meaningful ways. As mentioned in chapter 1 and to be explored in detail in chapter 4, the demarcation of sacred space and religious location plays a highly important role in determining the soteriological potential for female-spirit *shite* in Zenchiku's dramatic works. However, this space and location is frequently highly ambiguous or unstable. As seen through the analysis of the Daijōin political dispute and its textual examples, such as Jinson's account of armed battles between the Furuichi and Tsutsui clan factions, bloodshed occurred directly on the sacred grounds of Kōfukuji temple sites. While this type of warfare and destruction on sacred ground was commonplace during the medieval and Muromachi periods, such occurrences may have impacted Zenchiku's perceptions of ontology and soteriology in profound ways and should be duly considered.

Conclusion

While the full extent of Zenchiku's relationship with Kyōkaku is difficult to extract from the small number of references in the *Kyōgaku shiyōshō*, the discussion above suggests that their connection warrants a closer look. Prior scholarly assertions that Jinson alone served as Zenchiku's primary patron may simply be because there are more extant references to Zenchiku in his diaries. As I have argued here, the Daijōin political dispute is likely to have had a profound influence on Konparu Zenchiku's patronage decisions at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex in the mid-fifteenth century. Although apparently safer than service under

Shogun Yoshinori in Kyōto, the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex during Zenchiku's lifetime was still a potentially dangerous place. Securing patronage also meant securing the personal safety of his family and troupe members. The dispute, finally resolved in 1450, altered the Kōfukuji-Kasuga field of power, shifting the balance of power to Kyōkaku at Ichijōin and his allies, the Furuichi clan, who were rising in military strength in Nara City. It appears from the timeline of Zenchiku's interactions with Kyōkaku that Zenchiku was very aware of this shift and quickly moved to cement his relationship with the newly re-appointed *monzeki*, resulting in the Konparu appointment as *gakutō* affiliated with Kasuga Grand Shrine. By positioning his family as indispensable functionaries of the *kami* worship ritual center, it is possible that Zenchiku hoped to avoid the chaos that he experienced during Zeami's exile and the Daijōin political dispute. Without the prestige granted by this position, it would have been difficult for him to rise to the position of favor that he later enjoyed with Jinson. Additionally, the military conflict resulted in violence and bloodshed occurring within sacred spaces and locations that held significant importance to Zenchiku at the philosophical and possibly personal level. This may have deeply impacted his view of the ontological stability of sacred space and its soteriological potential, a major element of contention within his Third Category plays featuring female-spirits. Furthermore, Zenchiku may have felt able to express this and other anxieties brought about from life in an unstable and violent political climate allegorically through female-spirit plays, as the ostensible non-political content would have provided him with a greater level of artistic freedom and expression. In chapter 4, the ambiguity of sacred space and religious location, as well as other ontological and soteriological elements at play in determining the female-spirit's attainment of enlightenment, will be explored via analyses of the plays *Yōkihi*, *Tamakazura*, and *Nonomiya*.

Chapter 4: Stasis, Realization, and Ambiguity- The Dynamics of *Nyonin jōbutsu* in *Yōkihi*, *Tamakazura*, and *Nonomiya*

Section 1: *Yōkihi*- Heavenly Stasis

Sources, Allusion, and Metaphysics

Komparu Zenchiku's Third Category Noh *Yōkihi* takes place in a heavenly world existing beyond the human realm. Yet the *shite* of Yang Guifei occupying this realm expresses intense emotions that can only be described as human. This diverges significantly from the Buddhological rules delineated in chapter 2 implying that no negative emotions can be experienced in the heaven realms. The initial *honzetsu* for *Yōkihi* appears to be the final third of *Chang hen ge* (Song of Everlasting Sorrow), a narrative poem written by Chinese poet Bai Juyi (772-846). Active during China's Tang Dynasty (618-907), Bai Juyi's poetry exerted considerable influence on major works of the Heian period in Japan, and the subsequent medieval literary reception of Bai's poem was heavily filtered through the existing canon of Heian period literature. Therefore, examination of *Yōkihi*'s dramatic operation involves consideration of both Bai Juyi's original poem and its prior Heian period reception. From a critical perspective, the specific textual structure of Zenchiku's play, and its variations from this Chinese *honzetsu*, emphasizes *Yōkihi*'s thematic concerns of existential isolation, karmic clinging, and the seemingly static nature of the *shite* in the figure of Yang Guifei. In many ways, the aristocratic suffering figure of the *shite* in *Yōkihi* establishes complimentary themes that pervade Zenchiku's other two female-spirit plays under analysis (*Tamakazura* and *Nonomiya*): a deep textual connection to *Genji monogatari* as *honzetsu*; female-gendered modes of karmic suffering; and the centrality of sacred space and physical location as critical elements to the soteriological status of the *shite*. The play *Yōkihi* is unique in its narrative structure and presentation in that it by utilizes an otherworldly Chinese motif in a dramatic structure atypical for *mugen* (dream-vision) Noh plays. These two elements

strongly inform the ontological composition and soteriological status of the *shite* in *Yōkihi*. Before continuing to a deeper analysis of these soteriological elements, understanding the full depth of this Chinese *honzetsu*, its influence and connection with the Heian literary world, and further influence on the Japanese cultural world at large is critical.

The Reception of Bai Juyi in Premodern Japan

Chinese literature exerted strong influence over arts and letters in premodern Japan. At the dawn of the Heian period, detailed knowledge of the Chinese classics and composition in literary Chinese were important skills for men of learning and government. The early literati of Japan were also focused on creating their own verse in literary Chinese (漢詩, *kanshi*), which was heavily inspired by works from China's Six Dynasties period. By the start of the Heian period, this *kanshi* held official literary focus and precedent.¹⁹⁹ The imperial court was so enthused by Chinese-language verse that in a thirteen-year period it commissioned three volumes of Chinese verse and literature (勅撰詩集, *chokusenshishū*)²⁰⁰: the *Ryōunshū* (凌雲集, Collection from Above the Clouds, 814), the *Bunka shūreishū* (文華秀麗集, Collection of Beautiful and Graceful Poetry, 818), and the *Keikokushū* (經国集, Collection for Ordering the State, 827).²⁰¹ The *Keikokushū* served as a mirror of the literary environment of the time. It was modeled in form and content on the *Wén Xuǎn* (文選, J. *Monzen*, Collection of Literature, compiled between 520-30), an extensive collection from China. Including not only *kanshi*, but also *kambun* prose and imperial civil service examination essays, the *Keikokushū* demonstrates the extent to which Chinese letters had been absorbed into Japanese

¹⁹⁹ *Waka*, Japanese-language poetry, officially displaced *kanshi* as the dominant form of verse in 905 with the compilation of *Kokinwakashū*, the first imperially commissioned anthology of Japanese-language poetry.

²⁰⁰ Imperially commissioned collection of Chinese-language literature written by Japanese. Miner, *et al.*, *Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature*, 271.

²⁰¹ Miner, *et al.*, *Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature*, 362.

literature.²⁰² However, the landscape of literature in Japan would change shortly after this with the arrival of the poetry of Bai Juyi.

Bai Juyi's poetry became one of the most critical literary influences of the Heian period. As with many other modes of continental discourse, Bai's poetry entered the Japanese consciousness in the early ninth century through two routes: commercial trade with the mainland; and the activities of Japanese Buddhist monks traveling in China.²⁰³ While the impact of the Tang poet upon the world of *kanshi* was considerable, the synthesis of his works was also important in the development of Japanese *waka* poetry. In his treatise *Shinsen zuinō* (新撰髓腦, The Essence of Poetry Newly Selected), Fujiwara no Kintō (藤原公任, 966-1041) attempted to find a balance between the ornate Six Dynasties style and Bai's clearer poetic mode to create a formal *waka* stylistic.²⁰⁴ Of Bai's works, the *xīn yuèfù* (新樂府, J. *shingafu*, new ballads) were especially popular. However, the didactic nature of these works was ignored by many *kanshi* and *waka* poets, who preferred a depoliticized aesthetic.²⁰⁵

Such a selective approach to Bai Juyi is a hallmark of his reception in Japan. First Heian, and then later medieval poets and playwrights utilized Bai's works in several ways.

²⁰² Borgen, *Sugawara no Michizane and the Early Heian Court*, 42-3.

²⁰³ A compilation of Tang poetry featuring Bai's works made its way into the port city of Dazaifu, Kyūshū in 838. Then provisional governor Fujiwara no Takemori (藤原岳守, 808-851) sent the text to the capital, where it sparked off Japanese intense interest in the Tang poet. In 839 Bai deposited a copy of his complete works, *Baishi wenji* (白集, J. *Hakushi monjū*) at Nanchan Temple (南禪寺, C. *Nánchán Sì*, J. *Nanzenji*) in Suzhou for safekeeping. Five years later in 844 the Japanese monk Egaku (慧鑊, dates uncertain) spent two months at the same temple making a copy of this official version of Bai's works, which has come to be known as the *Kanazawa bunko-bon Hakushi monjū*, 金沢文庫本白氏文集). Another Japanese monk, Ennin (圓仁, 794-864), purchased a multi-volume edition of Bai's works in the Tang capital of Chang'an during the same time. The work of both monks was instrumental in the dissemination of Bai's complete work in the Japanese literary world of the time. Smits, "Reading the New Ballads," 169-70.

²⁰⁴ Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, 181-3.

²⁰⁵ Smits, "Reading the New Ballads," 174.

First, as source text for their own original works; Japanese writers would construct their own poems and texts with rich allusions to Bai Juyi's poetry. Of all the subjects addressed in Bai's collected poems, his poems detailing imperial consorts may have been the most popular with Heian writers. Referred to collectively as the *gohi* (五妃, Five Consorts),²⁰⁶ this was a group of five poems taken from different sections of Bai's collected works. The stories of these women, and the poetic images and rhetoric employed by Bai's poems about them, played a role in everything from Heian period *waka* and *monogatari* to Muromachi period Noh plays, especially in the form of *honzetsu* (sources materials), *honkadori* (poetic allusion), and complex intertextual variations. However, the negative political aspects embodied or confronted by these Chinese consorts were usually removed in Japanese re-interpretations. One frequent form taken by the *gohi* were as idealized female archetypes, typifying an emotional expression of isolation and longing.²⁰⁷ Of all the *gohi*, Yang Guifei (*Yōkihi*), heroine of *Chang hen ge*,²⁰⁸ especially captivated the Japanese artistic imagination.

Reception of *Chang hen ge* during the Heian period was multifaceted. Screen paintings illustrating scenes from Bai's poem were made for Heian emperors,²⁰⁹ and *Chang hen ge*'s poetic images and plot devices were heavily employed by major texts of the time

²⁰⁶ The five consorts are Wáng Zhāojūn (王昭君, J. Ō Shōkun), Lǐ Fūren (李夫人, J. Rifujin), Yáng Guìfēi (楊貴妃, J. Yōkihi), Shàngyáng Báifārén (上陽白髮人, J. Shōyo Hakuhatsumin), and Língyuán Qiè (陵園妾, J. Ryōenshō). Li, Shangyang, and Lingyuan's tales are all found in the *shingafu* while Wang and Yang's are told in longer narrative poems from other sections of the collected works. Sasaki, "Archetypes Unbound," 89.

²⁰⁷ Sasaki, "Archetypes Unbound," 87-8.

²⁰⁸ Stephen Owen's translation of *Chang hen ge* (glossed by Owen as "Song of Lasting Pain") from his *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* was used for this study (442-447) as well as Chen Hong's accompanying prose account to Bai's poem, "An Account to Go with the 'Song of Lasting Pain'" (448-452). Paul W. Kroll's translation of the poem as "Po Chu-I's 'Song of Lasting Regret,'" was also referenced.

²⁰⁹ Emperor Uda (867-931) was in possession of screen paintings depicting scenes from *Chang hen ge*. Our knowledge of the content depicted is derived from ten *waka* composed by lady-in-waiting and poet Ise (伊勢, d. 939). See poems 52-61 in Hirano, ed. *Ise shū* in Inukai, Gotō, and Hirano, eds. *Heian shikashū*. Sekine and Yamashita's *Ise shū zenshaku* also provides excellent notes on the poems as well as additional information regarding Uda's screen paintings.

period.²¹⁰ For example, the plot of *Chang hen ge* and the image of Yang Guifei play a critical role in the opening “Kiritsubō” chapter (桐壺の巻) of Murasaki Shikibu’s (紫式部, d. 1014?) mid-Heian text *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji).²¹¹ The deep intertextual association between Bai’s work and the opening chapter of *Genji* resulted in a complimentary relationship between the two texts in post-Heian classical Japanese literature. Furthermore, the image of Yang Guifei herself took on an independent life and meaning within the context of the premodern Japanese literary canon.²¹²

Chang hen ge: Transcendental Romance and Yang Guifei as an Object of Mourning

Let us start with a basic summary of *Chang hen ge*. It is a historical poem based on the great political scandal of the Tang Dynasty; the deep infatuation of Emperor Xuanzong with his consort Yang Guifei (719-756). Adopted by her uncle at a young age due to her father’s untimely death, Yang was first introduced into Xuanzong’s court as a concubine to his son, Prince Shou. After the death of the Emperor’s previous favorite consort, an official search was made for a replacement. Yang was recommended to Xuanzong, who was instantly taken with her. She was soon raised to level of *guifei* (貴妃, J. *kihi*), a title meaning “Precious Consort.” Yang entertained the Emperor with her superior artistry in dance, in which she was said to have no earthly equal. Xuanzong’s attentions became focused more on her than matters of state, whereupon internal corruption and external pressures began to wear on the empire. An ambitious regional military leader, An Lushan (安祿山, J. 705-757), had made

²¹⁰ *Chang hen ge* was also represented in other forms of visual art, referenced in *waka*, and performed as *rōei* (朗詠, selected lines of Chinese verse chanted to an accompanying song). *Monogatari*, narrative versions in Japanese, were also a popular format for dissemination of the *Yōkihi* mythos in Heian Japan. Fujii, *Genji monogatari nyūmon*, 19.

²¹¹ The initial plot of this opening chapter closely mirrors that of *Chang hen ge*, with several critical variations. In one pivotal scene, Emperor Uda's above mentioned screen paintings are featured. Abe, *et al.*, *Genji monogatari*, vol. 1, 33-5.

²¹² Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 508.

inroads within the court and became powerful enough to launch a full-scale rebellion against Xuanzong in 755. The court was forced to flee the capital of Chang'an (長安). During the evacuation, soldiers guarding the emperor refused to continue unless Yang, whom they blamed for the destabilization of the state, was put to death. Yang was strangled and her body buried by the roadside. Xuanzong then abdicated in favor of one of his sons, who eventually was able to quell the rebellion of An Lushan and reinstate legitimate Imperial rule. Later, Yang was given the title of Empress posthumously while Xuanzong grieved for her in retirement.²¹³

Although *Chang hen ge* deals with these historical events, Bai Juyi was more interested in portraying the tragic love of the Emperor and his Precious Consort. Bai Juyi was a Confucian scholar and active in government, but political conditions and historical cause and effect are obscured in the work to stage the romance between Xuanzong and Yang Guifei. Despite this, subtle hints as to the political effects caused by their affair are clearly voiced:²¹⁴

And the nights of spring seemed all too short, the sun would too soon rise, from this point on our lord and king avoided daybreak court.²¹⁵

The love of the couple, presented amongst natural spring scenery, is interrupted by violence in the form of rebellion. Following this, Yang's death at the hands of the emperor's own men is framed as an act of fate:

The six-fold army would not set forth, nothing could be done, and the fragile arch of her lovely brows there perished before the horses.²¹⁶

The rest of the poem, almost two thirds of its total length, is concerned with the Emperor's deep grief and mourning over the loss of his love and forms the poetic and thematic core of the work. Tortured by the pains of grief, Xuanzong employs a Daoist wizard to search the

²¹³ Jian and Luo, "Yang Guifei (or Yang Yuhuan)," 219-221.

²¹⁴ Lou, *Discourse Formation in Tang Tales*, 164-5.

²¹⁵ Owen, "Song of Lasting Pain," 442.

²¹⁶ Owen, "Song of Lasting Pain," 444.

celestial realms for some sign of Yang. The adept traverses the heavens, the earth, and the underworlds in search for her, but is unable to find any trace. He finally comes to Penglai (蓬莱, *J. Hōrai*), the Isle of the Immortals where Yang's spirit now resides. She delivers a touching speech to the adept of her longing for the Emperor and the court. Before the adept is to return to earth, she entrusts him with a jeweled hairpin and filigree box to bring back to her love, along with a reminder of the promise they made to each other in life, on the seventh night of the Seventh Month, during the festival of the Ox-herd Boy and the Weaver Girl.²¹⁷

if in Heaven, may we become those birds that fly on shared wing; or on Earth, then may we become branches that twine together.²¹⁸

The closing line of Bai's poem states that even after Heaven and Earth may cease to exist, "yet this pain of ours will continue and never finally end."²¹⁹ According to Manling Lou, this final ending in the heaven-like realm of Penglai, coupled with the creation of the eternal vow the lovers made on earth, completes the construction of a transcendental romance in *Chang hen ge*. One of the key points of this transcendental affect is that Xuanzong and Yang Guifei are finally rendered as a romantic couple on an equal social and romantic grounds through physical and spiritual separation, circumventing the political pressures of Emperorship and concubinage; with him remaining in the human realm and her reborn as a goddess in Penglai.²²⁰

²¹⁷ The legend of the Ox-herd Boy and the Weaver Girl is popular throughout East Asia and is deeply rooted in its folklore. The legend derives from the astronomical event of the stars Altair (the Ox-herd Boy) and Vega (the Weaver Girl) reaching their highest points in the summer night's sky. According to the legend the two were a pair of young lovers who lived in the heaven realm. They were so deeply in love that they spent all their time together, ignoring their duties of tending to the celestial herds and weaving work and were therefore separated. They are only allowed to cross the River of Heaven (the Milky Way) once a year, on the seventh night of the Seventh Month of the lunar calendar. The event and legend are celebrated by the *qīxī* festival in China, which was imported into Japan and celebrated in a modified form called *Tanabata* (七夕).

²¹⁸ Owen, "Song of Lasting Pain," 447.

²¹⁹ Owen, "Song of Lasting Pain," 447.

²²⁰ Lou, *Discourse Formation in Tang Tales*, 166-7.

From Yang Guifei to *Yōkihi*: Zenchiku's Dramatic Interpretation

In the case of Komparu Zenchiku's Noh play *Yōkihi*, Yang Guifei and her mythos may have appealed to Zenchiku for a variety of reasons. As indicated above, Bai Juyi's original work and its Japanese-language variations were engrained in the medieval Japanese literary tradition through their earlier Heian period reception. Furthermore, the archetype of Yang seemed well suited for composition in the *nyotai* (feminine style) as described by Zeami in *Sandō* discussed in chapter 1: she was of uncommonly high rank, possessed great skill in dance, and was historically renowned for her beauty. However, the *honzetsu* utilized by Zenchiku for composition was most likely not Bai's original Chinese-language poem and this appears to have played a significant role in forming the soteriological status of the *shite* in *Yōkihi*. According to Itō Masayoshi there is a strong possibility that Zenchiku's *Yōkihi* is informed by summaries of *Chang hen ge*'s plot and descriptions of Yang Guifei's image as found within medieval commentaries on *Genji monogatari*.²²¹ As mentioned in chapter 1, this type of filtering of source material during the Muromachi period was common, especially for a literary Chinese-language source such a *Chang hen ge*. It is highly likely that by the time Zenchiku was actively writing, Bai Juyi's original Tang poem was mostly known due to its status as a Chinese source text for *Genji monogatari*'s opening chapter, "Kiritsubō." Additional speculation as to the exact source employed by Zenchiku also points to *Chōgonka jo* (長恨歌序, Preface to the Song of Everlasting Sorrow), a *kanbun* text written in Japan featuring two key elements that mirrored are in *Yōkihi*: the dramatic action begins with the Daoist wizard's arrival in Penglai; and a special point is made of Yang Guifei's original

²²¹ Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 508.

existence as a heavenly being, who was then reincarnated as a mortal woman in Xuanzong's realm.²²²

Turning to the plot of *Yōkihi*, as mentioned above, the play begins with the arrival of the Daoist wizard (played by the *waki*) to Penglai, Isle of the Immortals. He summarizes key points of *Chang hen ge*'s narrative before asking one of the isle inhabitants (played by the *aikyōgen*) about Yang Guifei. He learns of the existence of a female deity who appears to be the manifestation of Yang's soul. The wizard then visits this goddess's palace (represented by a veiled *tsukurimono*, 作り物),²²³ where he encounters Yang Guifei in celestial form (the *shite*). From here, the action and poetic imagery are constructed out of allusions from Bai Juyi's original poem. The exchange of the jeweled hair-pin and a variant of the iconic joined-wing/entwined branches metaphor is featured prominently in the first act of *Yōkihi*.²²⁴

It is at this point in *Yōkihi* that the play's plot structure breaks with Bai Juyi's *Chang hen ge*. In the original, the poem simply ends with the climactic joined-wing/entwined branches metaphor. Zenchiku's text stands in marked contrast: at this point the wizard announces that he will be departing, causing Yang Guifei to be wracked with sorrow and longing. These are expressed by Yang through lines that combine nostalgic longing with Buddhist anxiety at reincarnation and the impermanence of existence, followed by a demonstration for the *waki* of her divine skill of dance.²²⁵ Yang Guifei's meditation on the

²²² Atkins, *Revealed Identity*, 172. It should be noted that the presentation of Yang Guifei as a divine being born into the human realm departs from both historical facts about Yang Guifei and Bai Juyi's narrative poem. The divinity of Yang is also echoed in Zenchiku's play, evidence that *Chōgonka jo* may have been a critical source text utilized in composition of *Yōkihi*.

²²³ *Tsukurimono*, “built things”, are the minimal stage props used in Noh theater. They are assembled and taken apart by hand before and after every performance. Usually made of thin wood, fabric, and paper they represent palaces, shrines, *torii* gateways, boats, and other buildings and items.

²²⁴ Koyama and Satō, *Yōkyokushū*, vol. 1, 355-6; Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 409.

²²⁵ As a slow *jo no mai* performed by the *shite*, the chorus states that this dance is *ui no kyoku*, the piece that Yang Guifei was famous for in life. Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 412. Note that this is the same piece performed by the *shite* (who is also a female deity) in the Noh play

process of reincarnation is linked inextricably with her feelings of sorrow and longing. Zenchiku emphasizes these elements of Yang Guifei's heavenly persona (in contrast to Bai's source text) by positioning their expression in the closing passages of the play and further highlights them through the *shite*'s slow final dance (序ノ舞, *jo no mai*). In doing so, Zenchiku focuses the audience's attention on Yang Guifei's ontology and soteriological status: although she has been reincarnated as a divine being in a heavenly realm, she is doomed to be forever tormented by feelings of longing, sorrow, and deep attachment. This causes her to be forever trapped, with enlightenment seemingly frustrated.

Paul Atkins remarks that of all Zenchiku's plays, *Yōkihi* creates an atmosphere of complete isolation and focuses on the stasis of the *shite*.²²⁶ Indeed, the above mentioned dramatic structure of *Yōkihi*, especially considering its variation from the *Chang hen ge* source's narrative structure, places direct emphasis on these qualities. While the image of Yang Guifei and her eternally lingering sorrow as seen in *Yōkihi* is thematically in the realm of *mugen* Noh dealing with female-spirit suffering soteriological conflicts, Zenchiku's play lacks the typical structural division associated with *mugen* plays of two distinct acts featuring a *maejite* (前ジテ, first act *shite*) who hides their true-identity by appearing as a local person, followed by a *nohijite* (後ジテ, second act *shite*) who returns in their true form. In the play, the *shite* initially appears to the *waki* in her true form of Yang Guifei, and remains as her for the entire course of the drama. *Yōkihi* also lacks the fluidity of time seen in *mugen* Noh: all actions occur in "real time," even though they may be taking place in a supernatural space and location. Due to these major structural elements, which are contrary to the *mugen* norm, *Yōkihi* is technically closer to the dramatic operation of *genzai* Noh, that is, plays in which the dramatic action takes place in reality, within the mortal realm. *Yōkihi* is therefore

Hagoromo (羽衣, The Feather Mantle).

²²⁶ Atkins, *Revealed Identity*, 174.

frequently categorized as a *genzai* Noh play due to these specifications. However, fitting Zenchiku's play into the classification of *genzai* Noh is also problematic. Most *genzai* Noh focus on common people in relatively realistic settings, encountering real-world conflicts.²²⁷ Nothing about *Yōkihi* can be viewed as taking place in the human realm or in a common time-space: its locale is a distant Chinese mythological realm, and Yang Guifei is a goddess of supreme beauty. Furthermore, the *waki* of the play, the Daoist wizard, is clearly described in the opening *michiyuki* (道行, travel song) passage as an ascetic undertaking a dream-vision/mantic journey that traverses multiple phenomenological states of being to reach the immortal isle of Penglai:

WAKI: Would there were a wizard,
 Would there were a wizard,
 to search for her and tell me
 where her spirit dwells.
 My ship sails on, plowing the waves,
 faintly visible, the island mountains.
 Where I will weave a traveler's pillow of grass.²²⁸

Besides serving as the *michiyuki*, which represents the dramatic act of traveling from one point to another, this opening passage also establishes two critical elements in *Yōkihi*: the shamanic elements of the dramatic action and the immediate allusive poetic connection to *Genji monogatari*. This is accomplished through word-play and poetic citation. The phrase “weave a traveler's pillow of grass”²²⁹ contains the overlaid pun of “brief sleep” (*karine*), therefore contextually indicating not only the common poetic conceit of a resting traveler but also the dream-vision utilized by the ascetic to contact beings in the spiritual realm. This is predicated with the imagery of a ship sailing through both waves *and* a void in space-time: *namiji wo wakete yuku fune no*, with the phrase *namiji* containing both the overlaid poetic

²²⁷ Motomasa's masterpiece *Sumidagawa*, where a mother is driven mad with grief while searching for her lost child, is often cited as one of the best examples of *genzai* Noh.

²²⁸ Leo Shingchi Yip's translation of *Yōkihi* was utilized for this study. Yip, *China Reinterpreted*, 195.

²²⁹ *Kusa no karine no makura yufu*, Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 406.

meanings of “waterway/the ocean” and *na* meaning “the void.”²³⁰ This punning compression can be taken to indicate the mantic journey of the Daoist wizard as he travels by boat to the supernatural shores of Penglai, conceived of in East Asian mythology as (paradoxically) both an actual physical location and in the void of space.

In Japan, conceptions of Penglai diverged from its initial Chinese Daoist conception as an isle of immortality and combined with indigenous beliefs in fantastic realms such as Tokoyo (常世) and the Dragon King’s Palace (龍宮城, *Ryūgūjō*).²³¹ Like its Chinese counterpart, the mythical Japanese land of Tokoyo is also occupied by immortal beings, however it lies below the ocean’s surface at the bottom of the sea.²³² As mentioned in chapter 2, section 4, the domain of the ocean was viewed in *kami* worship as both a portal to the spirit realm and domain of the *kami*. With shared features such as the sea, immortality, and the domain of sacred beings, the combination of the isle of Penglai with the indigenous subterranean world of Tokoyo may have appeared natural to the premodern Japanese. In the above passage, what is translated as “island mountain” is in fact *Tokoyo* (常世) in the original text. Although the dramatic action of *Yōkihi* does not take place beneath the ocean’s surface, the distinct ontological and supernatural characteristics of both foreign-Chinese Penglai and indigenous-Japanese Tokoyo should be considered when analyzing the space and location of *Yōkihi*’s dramatic action. Having provided information regarding the space and location for the dramatic action of *Yōkihi*, the Daoist wizard’s *michiyuki* provides a final crucial piece of information via an allusion to the famous “Wizard” poem from the “Kiritsubō” chapter of *Genji monogatari*. As noted, although the superficial *honzetsu* for Zenchiku’s *Yōkihi* is Bai Juyi’s *Chang hen ge*, deeper textual analysis reveals that the play draws heavily from this and other chapters of the *Genji*, aligning it with female-spirit *Genji* plays such as *Tamakazura* and

²³⁰ Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 406.

²³¹ Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 406; Nakamura, *et al.*, *Iwanami Bukkyō jiten*. 731.

²³² Ōno, *et al*, *Iwanami kogo jiten hoteiban*, 934.

Nonomiya. Furthermore, by shifting the focus of dramatic action away from Bai’s original poem’s closing passage (namely, the Daoist wizard bringing back evidence of Yang’s spirit to the Tang Emperor) and toward a mediation on feminine suffering caused by the karmic sin of attachment, Zenchiku aligns the play with the thematic overtones of soteriological conflict that dominate both the *Genji* and other Zenchiku female-spirit plays.

Mourning and Longing in the *Genji*: The Shadow of Yang Guifei and Influence on *Yōkihi*

As mentioned above, the line “Would there were a wizard” (*maboroshi mo ga na tsute nite mo*)²³³ intoned by the Daoist wizard as he undertakes his dual dream-vision/mantic journey to the isle of Penglai is a direct allusion to the famous “Wizard” poem from the “Kiritsubō” chapter of *Genji monogatari*. This poem is spoken by the Kiritsubō Emperor who is in deep mourning for his recently deceased love, the Kiritsubō Intimate:

<p><i>tazune yuku</i> <i>maboroshi mo ga na</i> <i>tsute nite mo</i> <i>tama no arika wo</i> <i>soko to shiru beku</i></p>	<p>If only there were a wizard who could go and inquire of the whereabouts of her soul, so that I may know that it is there.²³⁴</p>
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This poem implicitly refers to Bai’s *Chang hen ge* as the Kiritsubō Emperor is viewing screen paintings illustrating scenes from the Chinese poem. These *Chang hen ge* screen paintings (屏風絵, *byōbu-e*) referenced in “Kiritsubō” are a direct reference to a set historically documented in the personal poetry collection of early Heian poet Ise, who composed a series of poems for folding screen paintings depicting scenes from *Chang hen ge* commissioned by Emperor Uda (宇多天皇, 867-931, r. 887-897).²³⁵ In “Kiritsubō”, the

²³³ Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 406.

²³⁴ Translations from *Genji monogatari* are my own unless otherwise indicated. Abe, *et al.*, *Genji monogatari*, vol. 1., 111.

²³⁵ Hirano, *Ise shū*, 18-9. The sequence consisting of ten poems is composed on the topic of these screens. The first five are from the point of view of Xuanzong after his return to

screens are brought out for the Kiritsubō Emperor onto the veranda overlooking one of the palace's inner gardens. The Kiritsubō Emperor gazes at them, reciting both Chinese verse and native poetry composed by such luminaries as Ise and Ki no Tsurayuki (868-945) on the subject of *Chang hen ge*, obsessing “only on that theme, which he spoke of day and night.”²³⁶ Like Emperor Xuanzong, who dispatched the Daoist wizard to Penglai to bring back Yang's hairpin, the Kiritsubō Emperor has sent one of his ladies-in-waiting to the home of the Kiritsubō Intimate's mother, who has returned with a both a hairpin and a letter informing him about his infant son, Hikaru Genji. He composes the above poem while holding his former love's hairpin, thereby identifying himself in the role of Xuanzong. He then gazes directly at the screens depicting Yang Guifei. He sees the lotus blossoms of Taieki Lake and the willows of Biau in her features,²³⁷ again drawing a direct connection between his sorrow and the lament of *Chang hen ge*. Zenchiku's *Yōkihi* utilizes the same allusions, as well as a critical passage from the *Genji* that embodies both the “Kiritsubō” chapter and the Noh play's central themes of mourning and the pain of loss:

Day and night, he had said that they would fly side by side as two birds who share a pair of wings or be as two trees with branches intertwined, so now the unfulfilled life was full of inextinguishable regret.²³⁸

For Zenchiku's medieval viewership, Bai's *Chang hen ge* and Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji monogatari* were firmly linked intertextually. It is therefore critical to delineate the overall assimilation of *Chang hen ge* into Heian literature, and in *Genji* specifically. As examined

Chang'an, the last five from Yang Guifei's perspective in Penglai. Their longing for each other and pain of separation is emphasized.

²³⁶ *Tada sono suji wo zo, makuragoto ni sesasetamafu*. Abe, et al., *Genji monogatari*, vol. 1, 104.

²³⁷ *Taieki no fuyō, biau no yanagi mo*, (Taieki Lake's lotus blossoms and Biau's willows), Abe et al, *Genji monogatari*, vol. 1, 111. “there were lotuses in Tai-ye Pool, and willows in Wei-ang. But the lotus looked like her face, and the willows seemed like her bows,” Owens, *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 445.

²³⁸ *Asayū no kotogusa ni, hane wo narabe, eda wo kahasamu to chigirasetamahi shi ni, kanahazarikeru inochi no hodo zo, tsukisezu urameshiki*. Abe, et al., *Genji monogatari*, vol. 1, 111.

above, references and utilizations of Bai's narrative poem featuring Yang Guifei within *Genji monogatari* are the most highly concentrated in the opening chapter, "Kiritsubo." But in the world of *Genji*, the dynamics of karma and suffering through the *rokudō* are given more emphasis than in *Chang hen ge*, which takes a more detached Confucian viewpoint.

Additionally, utilizing Chinese poetry to structure the *Genji* narrative was well within literary precedent for the Heian period. At the height of the era, Murasaki Shikibu's contemporary Fujiwara Kintō was at work compiling the *Wakan Rōeishū* (和漢朗詠集, Japanese and Chinese Poems to Chant Aloud, 1013), a collection of Chinese couplets set side by side with *waka*.²³⁹ The juxtaposition of Chinese and Japanese poetry within Kintō's collection demonstrates the importance placed not only on recognition of China as a source of knowledge, but on the proper contextual framing and application of this knowledge, referred to as *zae* (才), within Heian Japan's government and aristocratic society. The utilization of Chinese learning and precedents came to be a language of power within the aristocratic hierarchy, and was subsequently gendered as part of the male domain.²⁴⁰

Bai Juyi's work was popular among all levels of literate Heian society, including the highest-ranking members of the imperial court.²⁴¹ For example, in her *Sarashina nikki* (更級日記, The Sarashina Diary), written in the 1050s, Sugawara Takasue's Daughter takes great pleasure in receiving a gift of an early *monogatari* (fictive narrative) version of *Chang hen ge* as a beautifully illustrated scroll.²⁴² For the daughter of a minor provincial official to come into possession of a work of literature with its origins in Chinese poetry shows the extent of influence of Bai Juyi's work over the Heian literary mindset. The central narrative of *Chang hen ge* was adapted to other literary mediums as well; for example, in the Muromachi period,

²³⁹ Pollack, *The Fracture of Meaning*, 59.

²⁴⁰ Fukumori, "Chinese Learning as Performative Power," 101-4.

²⁴¹ Fukumori, "Chinese Learning as Performative Power," 109. Murasaki Shikibu tutored her mistress, the Empress Shōshi, first secretly and later openly, in Bai Juyi's poetry.

²⁴² Fujioka, *et al.*, *Sarashina nikki*, 303.

it was circulated as a *shōmono* (抄物), a type of handbook of annotated excerpts from the original Chinese,²⁴³ titled *Yōkihi monogatari* (楊貴妃物語).

The above process demonstrates that by the time of Zenchiku, what was originally a Chinese narrative poem had been gradually assimilated into the vernacular literature of Japan. When the play *Yōkihi* was originally performed, the narrative and poetry may have been more closely identified with the world of *Genji monogatari* and Heian literature than Bai Juyi. Indeed, the sheer amount of poetry from multiple chapters of the *Genji* found in *Yōkihi* would have strongly resonated with literate viewers of the era. In addition to the “Kiritsubō” chapter, Noh scholar Matsuoka Shinpei identifies allusions to the “Yūgao” (夕顔の巻, chapter 4, Evening Face) chapter and its meditations on sorrowful memory as also being intrinsic to the poetic construction of *Yōkihi*.²⁴⁴ This deeply overlaid image of *Genji monogatari* onto *Yōkihi* means that we can consider the play to have two *honzetsu*. In sum, in many ways, *Yōkihi* can be considered a unique hybrid: the combinatory location in the mythological location of Penglai/Tokoyo, the utilization of *Chang hen ge* and *Genji* as joint *honzetsu*, and the dramatic structure combining elements of both *mugen* and *genzai* Noh, means that *Yōkihi* traverses genres, rhetorical techniques, and religious systems. It is within this hybrid and ultimately ambivalent setting that a drama centered on the themes of mourning, loss, and female soteriological conflict is acted out.

Karmic Suffering in *Yōkihi*: Ontology and Attachment

The ultimate focus of *Chang hen ge* is on the pain of the loss, mourning, and a distinctly female soteriological conflict. The “Kiritsubō” chapter of *Genji monogatari* utilizes Bai’s narrative poem for its allusive resonances to emphasize these themes in detailing the

²⁴³ Miner, *et al.*, *Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature*, 298.

²⁴⁴ Matsuoka, “Genji monogatari o yomu Konparu Zenchiku,” 100.

relationship between the Kiritsubō Intimate and the emperor. The play *Yōkihi* takes cues from the original Chinese poem and the *Genji* at large on this theme, while also drawing heavily from the *Genji*'s broader thematic concern of female karmic suffering due to love relationships and social status. The pain of Yang Guifei, the *shite*, is felt intensely, as is her own ephemerality;

SHITE: Indeed, it is just as you say.
It is His majesty's love that
you have come all this way to locate a
person now dead,
a spirit ephemeral as the dew.
But your visit only adds more pain.
The chrysanthemum despises the
occasional wind that dries its blossoms and leaves.²⁴⁵

Spoken by Yang Guifei upon first meeting with the Daoist wizard, the poetic overtones of this passage express her sorrow and mourning. From an ontological standpoint, she states that her body/self is now like the dew,²⁴⁶ with her soul in a state of flux.²⁴⁷ The phrase “body like the dew” (*mi no tsuyu*) is cited as originally from an Izumi Shikibu *waka* found in the late Kamakura period poetry collection *Fuboku wakashū* (夫木和歌集), and is a symbolic of ephemerality.²⁴⁸ The imagery of the wind causing pain to the chrysanthemum is from a *waka* by Fujiwara Sadamasa taken from the mid-Kamakura period collection *Shoku Kokinwakashū* (続古今和歌集).²⁴⁹ The poetic affect is to illustrate the emotional desolation of the *shite* through bleak autumn imagery associated with decay. This type of imagery is continued as the dramatic action of *Yōkihi* progresses:

SHITE: Such was our pledge, but in a world,
Such was our pledge, but in a world,
where transmigration of birth and death is a rule.
The body was left there on Bakai slope.
The spirit has come to this palace.

²⁴⁵ Yip, *China Reinterpreted*, p. 199; Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 408

²⁴⁶ *Ima wa kahinaki mi no tsuyu no*. Itō, *Yōkyokushū*, (*ge*), 408.

²⁴⁷ *Aru ni mo aranu tama*. Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 408.

²⁴⁸ Headnote #13, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 409.

²⁴⁹ Headnote #14, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 409.

The bird longs for her mate,
she lies on one wing alone.
The tree branch too withers,
and its color fades instantly.²⁵⁰

In this passage, Yang Guifei is directly alluding to the pledge she made with Xuanzong as quoted in *Chang hen ge*:

if in Heaven, may we become
those birds that fly on shared wing;
or on Earth, then may we become
branches that twine together.²⁵¹

In *Genji monogatari*, the Kiritsubō Emperor directly quotes from this passage from Bai's narrative poem. However, in *Yōkihi*, even in the seemingly sacred space of the immortal realm of Penglai/Tokoyo, the karmic sin of attachment appears to have broken the vow: a solitary, loveless bird on one wing²⁵² and withered white branches.²⁵³ The second line detailing the branches withering and fading is of special significance to the Yang spirit's soteriological status, as it refers to how the *shorea robusta* trees (沙羅双樹, J. *sara sōsho*) withered and turned white upon the death of the historical Buddha, Siddārtha Guatama (釈迦牟尼, J. *Shakamuni*).²⁵⁴ Based on the overall negative context in *Yōkihi*, it is unlikely that Zenchiku is referring to the Buddha's entry into *nirvāṇa*, to indicate possible enlightenment for Yang's spirit in Penglai/Tokoyo. Rather, it focuses on the sense of sadness and loss that those surrounding the Buddha felt with his passing, exemplified in supposedly inanimate plants turning white to express their mourning. Here, the image of white, decaying trees serves to underscore Yang Guifei's desolate mourning, signs of decay, and the distance in temporal space that she occupies from soteriological aid that the Dharma could provide. In

²⁵⁰ Yip, *China Reinterpreted*, 200; Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 410.

²⁵¹ Owen, *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 447.

²⁵² *Hiyoko mo tomo wo koi, hitori tsubasa wo katashiki*. Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 410.

²⁵³ *Renri mo edakuchite, tachimachi iro wo henzu to mo*. Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 410.

²⁵⁴ Headnote #4, Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 410.

fact, Yang's spirit seems acutely aware of the *rokudō* and the inevitability of suffering along it through endless transmigration:

SHITE: When one thinks of the distant ages of the past,
life's beginning is unknowable.

CHORUS: Eternal incarnations continue
and birth and death never end.

SHITE: Yet, among the twenty-five abodes of beings,
are there any excused from the law
that all who are born must die?

CHORUS: From the Five Signs of Decay of a Celestial Being
to those long-living dwellers of the Continents around
Mount Shumi,
to those who live a thousand years
on the Northern Continent,
all their lives will end.

SHITE: Not to mention the uncertainty of the order of death.

CHORUS: This is the saddest of all sorrows, it is said.²⁵⁵

In the above passage, the spirit of Yang (as voiced by both the *shite* and chorus) states the inevitability of transmigration as a Buddhist law, with the cycle of birth and death being endless.²⁵⁶ Highlighting Yang's immediate concern with soteriological matters, she states that *all* dwelling within the Twenty-Five Abodes of Beings (二十五有, *nijūgōu*)²⁵⁷ are bound to this law, with none exempt.²⁵⁸ The subtle nuance here is that Yang may be referring to herself, which is emphasized further as she continues by discussing the Five Signs of Decay of a celestial being (天上五衰, *tenjō no gosui*). These are the signs that a celestial being (*tenjō*) is approaching death and include: the flower-crown falling from above the head; heavenly robes becoming filthy; sweating from the armpits; eyes suddenly spinning; and finally, being

²⁵⁵ Yip, *China Reinterpreted*, 202; Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 411.

²⁵⁶ *Mirai yōyō no ruten, sara ni shoji no owari mo nashi*. Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 411.

²⁵⁷ Three realms of existences that are sub-divided into twenty-five realms where all will transmigrate. Headnote #15, Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 411.

²⁵⁸ *Idure ka shoja hitume no kotowari ni moren*. Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 411.

unable to return to the original abode in a heavenly realm.²⁵⁹ She concludes by describing her stark soteriological outlook, that all across the Buddhological cosmos, from celestial beings to those who dwell on faraway Mount Shumi and the Northern Continent, will eventually die.²⁶⁰ From this passage it is clear that mortality and soteriological potentiality weigh heavily on the Yang spirit, despite her existence in a heaven-like realm, positioning these issues at the forefront of the dramatic action of the play.

The reason for this is revealed in the next passage, where Yang's spirit confirms her ontology as a celestial being in a previous life that was reborn in the human realm:

CHORUS: Once was I, too, a celestial being.
But due to a certain karma,
I was born into the human world for a while.
Raised in the inner chamber of the house of the Yō family,
no one knew me yet.

This passage leads the *kuse* section of *Yōkihi*. The *kuse* vocal narrative style was pioneered by medieval female *kusemai* performers whose distinctive vocal and dance style was adopted by Noh theater. Performed by the chorus (地, *ji*), the *kuse* is typically the most emotionally impactful section of the first act of the play, where the *shite* reveals its inner psychology and personal conflict. This is the case in *Yōkihi*, where Yang reveals the root cause of her karmic suffering: her rebirth in the world of humans from a heaven realm and subsequent infatuation with the Tang Emperor, resulting in the female-gendered karmic sin of attachment. Paul Atkins has noted that Yang's status as a celestial being was first delineated by Noh scholar Wang Donglan. Wang identified the *shite*'s heavenly origins in the medieval Japanese *kanbun* text *Chōgonka jo* (長恨歌序, Preface to the Song of Everlasting Sorrow), which also provides Zenchiku's *Yōkihi* with the language referencing karma and being born into the

²⁵⁹ Nakamura, *et al.*, *Iwanami Bukkyō jiten*, 275.

²⁶⁰ Both mysterious locations chronicled in the late-Muromachi period dictionary *Ikyōshū* (伊京集), stating that people of Mount Shumi live to five-hundred, while those on the Northern Continent live to the age of one-thousand. Headnote #17, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 411.

human realm.²⁶¹ This utilization of native Japanese retellings of the Yang Guifei mythos is corroborated by Itō Masayoshi, who cites texts such as *Chōganka den* (長恨歌伝, also mentioned in Wang’s study) and the *Yō taishin gaiden* (楊太真外伝), along with *Genji monogatari*, as major sources for the Yang spirit as it appears in Zenchiku’s play.²⁶² The main inspiration of these native-Japanese *honzetsu* on Zenchiku’s *Yōhiki* is the idea that Yang Guifei was originally a celestial being with corresponding divine ontological status. However, the Yang Guifei spirit of *Yōkihi* is highly problematic and complex: she has already been reborn once into the realm of humans and died; is aware of her past ontological and soteriological statuses; and is additionally acutely aware of her own mortality and suffering from the karmic sin of attachment even though she is dwelling in a heaven-like realm. These problematic elements of the Yang spirit are further illustrated in the closing lines of the *kuse* section, where she specifically refers to the suffering caused by her karmic bonds via the chorus:

CHORUS: If there were no unavoidable parting in this world,
 we would have been together forever.
 Yet no one can escape, for when one hears,
 “those who meet must part,”
 [it means] the very act of meeting is parting,²⁶³

“Those who meet must part” (*esha jōri*) is a Buddhist phrase foregrounding the ephemerality of all relationships.²⁶⁴ Following the shite’s slow *jo no mae* dance, this focus on ephemerality is transformed to outright sorrow and mourning with the drama’s closing lines:

CHORUS: I will never meet His majesty again in the world.
 Though a world of suffering,
 How I long for those times long past.
 She sinks to the floor of the Palace of the Immortal Land,
 and there remains weeping, seats herself.²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ Wang. “Nō ‘Yōkihi’ no tenkyo,” 15-6.

²⁶² Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 508.

²⁶³ Yip, *China Reimagined*, 204; Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 412.

²⁶⁴ Ōno, *et al*, *Iwanami kogo jiten hoteiban*, 72.

²⁶⁵ Yip, *China Reinterpreted*, 205; Itō, *Yōkyokusū* (*ge*), 412-3.

These closing lines ground the spirit of Yang Guifei in the realm of hybrid supernatural Penglai/Tokoyo, where she continues to endure her karmic suffering of attachment. The reason for her sorrow is understandable given her original celestial origin and current state, even living in what ostensibly seems to be a paradise. Also of interest is the line, “I will never meet His majesty again in the world,”²⁶⁶ hinting that not only are future meetings with her love Xuanzong in a heaven realm impossible, but that they will never encounter each other in any other realm, such as the human world. Instead, her attachment and clinging to Xuanzong seems to have bound her to the current location of the supernatural realm of Penglai/Tokoyo.

Inability to Transmigrate: Stasis or Incorrect Ritual Process?

Zenchiku's play *Yōkihi* closes with intense focus on the soteriological suffering experienced by the *shite*. This stands in direct opposition to Manling Lou's above mentioned interpretation of Yang Guifei's reincarnation as a goddess in Bai's original Chinese conception of Penglai, which functions as a means of creating equality between the separated couple and establishing the narrative as one of transcendental romance. Despite its effectiveness as a dramatic means of conveying intense emotional resonance and dramatic impact, the highly complex ontology of the *shite* within the greater cosmological schematic design of *Yōkihi* reduces the potentiality for enlightenment.

As we have seen, delineating the layers of *honzetsu* in *Yōkihi*, from Bai's original Chinese poem, to Japanese-language texts such as *Chōgonka jō*, and *Genji monogatari*, reveals the complex and multifaceted nature of work's source material. The dynamic nature of *Yōkihi*'s sources contributes to the creation of a Yang spirit with a unique ontology and resulting soteriological status that exists only in the world of Zenchiku's play. Additionally,

²⁶⁶ *Kimi ni wa kono yo ahi min koto mo*. Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 412.

the elaborate weave of poetic allusions is central to how this status is engaged within the dramaturgy of the play itself.

Also of crucial interest is the location of the hybrid Penglai/Tokoyo setting and the role of Daoist wizard as *waki*. As may be deduced from the above argument, the Yang persona appears to be karmically trapped in a heaven realm that over the course of the dramatic action of *Yōkihi* becomes increasingly hellish. The spiritual resonances of the combinatory Chinese/Japanese space of Penglai/Tokoyo may be a central element to this. It is not a Buddhist space but simply a strange, somewhat foreign land where the Yang spirit acknowledges the inevitability of her own decay and death. Although Yang Guifei appears acutely aware of the Dharma and its working, she is unable to actively move forward toward actualization. As can be seen from the above citations from *Yōkihi*, she may be too deeply enmeshed in the delusive cycle of attachment and wrongful clinging, karmic sins that may only be aggravated by her existence in a beautiful heaven-like realm. Finally, the *waki* in the form of the Daoist wizard, while an ascetic able to undertake a dream-vision to find her soul, does not possess the Buddhist knowledge to offer her soteriological aid. As established in chapter 2, women in the everyday world of medieval Japan were frequently seen as needing either ritual or spiritual guidance to achieve enlightenment. Despite her celestial ontological status, the Daoist wizard does not seem able or willing to provide Yang's spirit with the ritual assistance and spiritual knowledge needed to free her from the delusion which binds her. Perhaps this is because he was only tasked by the Tang Emperor with bringing back evidence of her existence, not with saving her soul. In the next play under analysis, *Tamakazura*, we will encounter both a *shite*, *waki*, and a spiritual location that are all fully capable and powerful enough to break through a powerful delusion to achieve enlightenment.

Section 2: *Tamakazura*—Pilgrimage and Allegoresis

Sacred Space and Pilgrimage

In contrast to the Yang Guifei persona of *Yōkihi*, the *shite* of *Tamakazura* features one of the original heroines from Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji monogatari*, rather than a hybrid archetype filtered through multiple levels of literary transmission. The character of Tamakazura was affected by the multifaceted medieval reception of *Genji*, which left her ontological status in something of a grey area for many readers who were not clear on whether Murasaki Shikibu's tale was fiction or history. Not dissimilar to Ono no Komachi, her female gender and fictional status made her "biography" especially malleable, and left her soteriological status in limbo as well. In the following analysis of the female-spirit Noh play *Tamakazura*, I will demonstrate the almost paradoxical nature of the *shite* and how she grapples with the female-gendered sins of karmic attachment and sexual lust, and the possibility for female enlightenment within the context of the medieval *honji suijaku* paradigmatic worldview. Issues of sacred space and geographic location, especially as they relate to Buddhist institutions and their associated locales are of special importance in *Tamakazura*.

Tamakazura has been categorized as both a Third Category play featuring a female-spirit *shite* and also as a Fourth Category, or miscellaneous play.²⁶⁷ This may be primarily due to the disordered state of mind of the *shite* in the second act of the drama. Whereas the Tamakazura character of *Genji* is frequently cited as being strong-willed and self-reliant, the Tamakazura spirit of Zenchiku's Noh is both a ghost and an enlightenment-seeking pilgrim to the sacred site of Hatsusedera,²⁶⁸ drawn to the power of its Eleven-Headed Kannon image,²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ Miscellaneous plays, often *onna-monogurui* (madwoman) plays featuring living female characters.

²⁶⁸ Hatsusedera (初瀬寺) is the older pronunciation of the temple complex's name and one featured in premodern literary works such as *Tamakazura*. The institution is now called Hasedera (長谷寺). It is in Sakurai City, Nara prefecture.

which is said to hold special spiritual power for women. The Eleven-Headed Kannon image at the temple complex was especially famous by the Heian period for its ability to grant wishes to the devoted, deriving its power from the sacred tree from which it was carved in the early eighth century. Sarah J. Horton describes the origin story of the holy image;

Although Hasedera temple proudly tells of the sacred wood from which its Kannon was carved, it neglects to tell the whole story. According to the tenth-century *Three Jewels*, a great flood occurred in 601, washing up a huge tree. Because the tree was not treated properly, the local villagers suffered. Finally, someone heard of the tree and vowed to have it carved into an Eleven-Headed Kannon, but he died without accomplishing this. The tree remained untouched for eight years, causing a plague in the village. When the tree was revealed to be the source of the misfortune, the villagers threw it into the Ha[tsu]segawa river. Finally, the young monk Tokudō learned of the tree, was impressed by its power, and decided to make it into an Eleven-Headed Kannon, moving it in 720 to what is now Ha[tsu]sadera temple. Unable to have the image carved, however, “He grieved and lamented for seven or eight years, constantly seating himself before the tree chanting: ‘May my worship of your wondrous power enable the image of the Buddha to be formed!’” At last, the empress supported the project, and the image was completed in 727.²⁷⁰

Horton writes that this origin myth for Hatsusedera’s Kannon would have a dual purpose in the religious mindset of the medieval faithful: it verified the inherent miraculous power of the temple complex’s image and also demonstrated that worshipers could not be neglectful in devotion.²⁷¹ The medieval text *Hatsusedera Kannon genki* (初瀬寺観音験記, Records of Miracles of the Hatsusedera Kannon, compiled late-twelfth to fifteen century) compiles stories expounding the supernatural power of the temple complex’s image, with special emphasis on promoting faith in the Eleven-Headed Kannon, devotional pilgrimage to Hatsusedera, and that knowledge of the Kannon image’s power extends as far away as China.²⁷² In the earlier Heian period, the belief that Hatsusedera’s image could grant wished

²⁶⁹ The Eleven-Headed manifestation of the bodhisattva of infinite compassion. The multiple heads demonstrate the bodhisattva’s awareness of the suffering of all sentient beings and the eleven stages toward enlightenment. The Eleven-Headed Kannon is an important bodhisattva for the esoteric Shingon sect, of which Hatsusedera was and still is associated.

²⁷⁰ Horton, *Living Buddhist Statues*, 100-1.

²⁷¹ Horton, *Living Buddhist Statues*, 101.

²⁷² Horton, *Living Buddhist Statues*, 103-4.

or reveal truths, specifically regarding love relationships to women, had already taken hold and the temple had become a prosperous pilgrimage site, as demonstrated in episodes from the personal diaries of aristocratic women such as *Kagerō nikki* (蜻蛉日記, The Mayfly Diary) and *Sarashina nikki*.²⁷³ Such a pilgrimage is undertaken by the character of Tamakazura in *Genji monogatari*, who visits the Hatsusedera complex following her return to Heian-kyō and devotions first at Yawata Shrine (八幡神社). Her surrogate brother, the Bungo Deputy, who is caring for Tamakazura and her nurse, describes the temple thusly,

“Next there are the buddhas, among whom Hatsuse is famous even in Cathay for vouchsafing the mightiest boons in all Japan. Hatsuse will certainly be quick to confer blessing on our lady, since she has always lived in our land, however far away.” He had he set out again.²⁷⁴

Having spent his entire life in the government outpost of Dazaifu, Kyūshū, the miraculous power of Hatsudera is still common knowledge to the Bungo Deputy, who hopes the sacred space of the temple complex and its image will assist his adopted sister in her new life in the capital city. As will be seen through textual analysis of Zenchiku’s *Tamakazura*, the sacred space of the Hatsusedera temple complex and its Eleven-Headed Kannon image and culture of female pilgrimage plays a vital role in defining the soteriological status of the play’s *shite*.

The play follows the standard *mugen* Noh plot: a wandering monk is visiting the Hatsuse River area and meets a mysterious boat-woman. She offers to pole him along the river toward the temple complex. During their conversation, she slowly reveals herself to be the spirit of Tamakazura, who has a deep karmic attachment to the location, as it was where she met her former nurse Ukon upon returning from Kyūshū.²⁷⁵ She asks the monk to pray for her enlightenment as she suffers from the karmic sin of lust. After the *aikyogen*

²⁷³ Horton, *Living Buddhist Statues*, 101-3.

²⁷⁴ Murasaki Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji*, trans. by Royall Tyler, 414.

²⁷⁵ Tamakazura is the illegitimate daughter of Hikaru Genji’s close friend Tō no Chūjō. A minor aristocratic family in Dazaifu, the Imperial court’s powerbase in Kyūshū, has adopted her. When she comes of age, an uncouth provincial lord of low rank seeks to marry her. Her surrogate family decides their only recourse is to flee to the capital (present day Kyōto) and attempt to find her birth father. See “Tamakazura” chapter in Tyler, trans., *The Tale of Genji*.

interlude,²⁷⁶ the priest prays for her enlightenment, ritually chanting direct passages from the *Lotus Sutra*. The spirit reemerges and is revealed in her true form as Tamakazura. She expresses her pain and sorrow before finding the Buddhist Dharma and true enlightenment.

Kinoshita Yoshimi has argued that the work's structure and the figure of Tamakazura within Zenchiku's play is heavily informed by an earlier work, *Ukifune*, a mixed-category *Genji* play (also Third/Fourth featuring a female-spirit) that was most likely heavily edited by Zeami.²⁷⁷ Kinoshita states that the dramatic structure of the earlier play and the figure of the Ukifune spirit as a woman deluded by lust is an essential element in the construction of the *shite* within *Tamakazura*.²⁷⁸ I would argue that while the influence of the *Ukifune* template does inform the work, both plays follow a similar pattern of the female-spirit agonizing in its passage through the *rokudō* seeking enlightenment, with their spirit returning to locations of karmic significance in their individual *honzetsu* source: Uji River for *Ukifune* and the Hatsusedera complex for *Tamakazura*.²⁷⁹ Furthermore, the female-spirit of *Ukifune* suffers from *mononoke* (spirit possession) and makes this fact clear to the *waki* in *Ukifune*, while this element is missing from the ontological status of the *shite* in *Tamakazura*. Zenchiku's play deviates from the earlier work in critical ways concerning soteriology: specifically, Buddhist interpretations of Tamakazura's name and the monk's ritualized recitation of the *Lotus Sutra* to pray for the *shite*'s soul. The Tamakazura character of this play may at first glance appear to be a cobbled together composite figure built from poetically associated words and images

²⁷⁶ The halfway point of a *mugen* Noh play. The *shite* in their first costumed form leaves the stage. A *kyōgen* (comedic) actor in the role of a local villager or similar character is approached by the *waki*, who inquires about the story related by the *shite* in the first part of the play. The *kyōgen* actor confirms the information to the *waki*, often adding additional details. The *aikyōgen* interlude for each play may change based on the individual school of Noh theater.

²⁷⁷ Kinoshita, "*Tamakazura no kōsō*," 1-4.

²⁷⁸ Kinoshita, "*Tamakazura no kōsō*," 4.

²⁷⁹ The Uji River was the site of *Ukifune*'s suicide attempt in "*Ukifune*" (浮舟の巻, Ch. 51, Drifting Boat) from *Genji monogatari*.

tied to her name, the related Tamakazura cycle from *Genji monogatari*,²⁸⁰ and the prior Ukifune model. But I would argue, via close examination of key passages of the play, that on a deeper level she represents the soteriological essence of Zenchiku's reading of the Tamakazura character *honzetsu* within *Genji monogatari* combined with a distillation of the sacred space in and around the Hatsusedera complex and its Eleven-Headed Kannon image.

Hatsuse and Tamakazura: Sacred Space and Allusive Duality

Tamakazura's spirit has a seemingly dual nature in the play bearing her name. In the first act of the play, she appears as a religious pilgrim with close ties to the sacred space of the religious complex of Hatsusedera, its sacred and miraculous iconography, and the paradise-like natural setting it occupies. Pilgrimage was an important part of life for women in medieval Japan and the *shite*'s arrival in the play carries nuances of one lost, looking for safe-haven:

SHITE: Rowing hither yearning always for the past,
where can I find a haven from the endless
approaching waves? Below the moon's arc in heaven
my soul wanders like a ship without a light.²⁸¹

Itō Masayoshi's annotation of the play notes that this passage's reference to the moon (*kokoro no tsuki*) is a common poetic conceit for *satori* (enlightenment), and is frequently referred to as "the moon of enlightenment." Furthermore, the imagery of a boat unable to find mooring alludes to drifting on the *rokudō*.²⁸² The *shite*'s opening monologue, with its *mitate* (見立て, layered meaning) of a boat, wandering havenless in the dark, hints at the level of spiritual delusion at play. Kinoshita also cites this passage to argue for the overall river

²⁸⁰ The Tamakazura cycle is ten chapters in total, starting with "Tamakazura" (玉鬘の巻, Ch. 22, The Tendril Wreath) and ending with "Makibashira" (真木柱, Ch. 31, The Handsome Pillar).

²⁸¹ Translation of *Tamakazura* taken from Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*. Noted where modified. Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 120; Itō, *Yōkyokushū (chū)*, 322.

²⁸² Itō, *Yōkyokushū (chū)*, 322.

setting as founded on the general structure of the earlier play *Ukifune*.²⁸³ As Itō additionally notes, the boat setting also serves to emphasize Tamakazura's adopted family's flight from Kyūshū.²⁸⁴ As mentioned above, her adopted family originally made this journey to reach Hatsusedera. Tamakazura's spirit is re-tracing her steps, solidifying her status as a pilgrim, an extremely important role for her soteriological status.

Tamakazura continues to establish herself as a devoted pilgrim of Hatsusedera and to connect herself with its sacred space and location, as she extols its virtues, stating:

CHORUS: In this way, I have come to the temple,
in this way, I have come to the temple,
Mount Potalaka before my very eyes.
Awesome is the view in all directions.²⁸⁵

Again, the Hatsusedera complex and the sacred site it physically occupies are of primary importance to Tamakazura's spirit, who has repeatedly been returning or attempting to returning to worship the image of the Eleven-Headed Kannon at Hatsusedera but has been thwarted due to her karmic delusion, as will be elucidated subsequently. Potalaka (補陀落, J. *Fudaraku*) is the name for several cities associated with the One-Thousand Armed, Eleven-Headed variation of Kannon, supposedly located variously in Southern India, Tibet, and China.²⁸⁶ It symbolizes the paradise of Kannon and directly references the Eleven-Headed Kannon statue sacred to women enshrined in Hatsusedera.

At this point several questions may be raised: why does this female-spirit so fervently long to return to this site? Moreover, why has she been unable to transmigrate? As previously mentioned, the play *Tamakazura* follows the standard *mugen* Noh plot structure, where the main character slowly reveals their story in the first act of the play, before divulging the

²⁸³ Kinoshita, "*Tamakazura no kōsō*," 4.

²⁸⁴ Itō, *Yōkyokushū (chū)*, 322.

²⁸⁵ Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 121; Itō, *Yōkyokushū (chū)*, 323.

²⁸⁶ Mochizuki, *Mochizuki Bukkyō daijiten*, 429-30.

whole truth and their true-identity to the monk. This key moment occurs in the following passage:

SHITE: It is to the memory of Hikaru Genji.
This was the poem composed long ago when Tamakazura met
Ukon during a pilgrimage to Hatsuse.
Please show compassion for them
and say prayers on their behalf.²⁸⁷

While the dialogue continues to emphasize the importance of the location, we finally learn of its importance in the past life of the spirit. Tamakazura mentions Hikaru Genji, a major figure in her life that serves to establish the setting for viewers of the play. By mentioning this one name, Zenchiku's Muromachi period viewership would immediately locate the action as set in the Heian period, an era much revered by the literary and artistic world of his time.

Mentioning her pilgrimage in the past, Tamakazura implies that her current role is also that of a religious pilgrim, already grounded as an important aspect of religious life for women in both the Heian and Muromachi periods. Finally, she directly asks the traveling monk to "say prayers" (perform a *kuyō* ritual) for her departed spirit. This is the first time the name "Tamakazura" is directly used in the play. A *kuyō* ritual in medieval Japanese Buddhism varied depending on the sect but in general was performed for the commemoration of the dead. Within *mugen* Noh theater, it is extremely common for the spirit of the deceased to ask a monk character (the *waki*) to perform such rites. The spirit's hope is that with the extra ritual assistance from the Buddhist monk, an ascetic who possesses special knowledge of the spirit realm, they would be able to achieve enlightenment.

This leads us back to a simple question: why has Tamakazura's spirit been blocked from enlightenment? She appears to be a faithful Buddhist pilgrim, devoted to Hatsusedera and the Eleven-Headed Kannon held sacred there. What else is there in her nature that might help us untangle this problem? The following passages illuminate the conflict:

²⁸⁷ Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 122 (translation modified); Itō, *Yōkyōkushū (chū)*, 324.

SHITE: Many years have passed,
and the bond for which I prayed at Mount Hatsuse
has ended;

CHORUS: the bell on the hill, I despaired, would never ring
for me, to meet a person from the distant past
beyond imagining had I not visited
the place where the twin-trunked cedar stands
by the ancient river, as the poem says.
The chance to meet the same way again today
is a gift bestowed by the Law. If, indeed,
the jewel lies hidden in a robe, dispel
the delusion entangling Tamakazura.²⁸⁸

This textual passage is from the *kuse* portion of the play. This *kuse* is atypical in that no specific life event or tragedy (such as lustful clinging to a lost love or other negative Buddhist attachments frequently attributed to women) is given as cause of Tamakazura's suffering. Also, it does not feature an abundance of poetic language borrowed from *Genji monogatari*, the *honzetsu* for the play, as we will analyze in detail in the following work, *Nonomiya*. However, in the above passage, Tamakazura's spirit begins to take clearer shape as a composite character created from the following diverse elements. The first is the importance of karmic connections as critical to her soteriological status, emphasized by the repeated use of the "twin-trunked cedar" (*futamoto no tsugi*) the poetic focal point of the play. This poetic motif is originally the central conceit within a poetic exchange between Tamakazura and Ukon in the "Tamakazura" chapter of *Genji monogatari*. A twin-trunked cedar tree still exists to this day at the present-day location of Hasedera in Nara, and in *waka* poetry was traditionally associated with connections, especially romantic. In *Tamakazura*, the repeated utilization of the "twin-trunked cedar," itself an identifier of Hatsusedera, serves again to ground the sacred space and location of the play into a clearly defined religious space. It also emphasizes the critical importance of karmic connections and connectivity inherent within the spiritual worldview of the play, especially concerning soteriological matters. Furthermore,

²⁸⁸ Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 123; Itō, *Yōkyokushū (chū)*, 325.

it places the spirit of Tamakazura at the disposal of the monk as her soteriological benefactor: it is only through this karmic meeting with *him* and the direct intercession brought on by the *kuyō* rituals that will be performed that her spirit may reach enlightenment.

Finally, and most critically, Tamakazura reveals the first half of her ontological and soteriological status, which is the first character of her name: *tama* (玉). In the original Japanese passage of text, she explicitly asks the monk for the “Jewel of the Law” (法の玉, *hō no tama*) that is hidden within the robe. This is a direct allusion to a parable from the *Lotus Sutra*, “Receipt of Prophecy by Five Hundred Disciples,” (Ch. 8, scroll 4):

It may be likened to this case: A destitute man
Goes to the house of a close friend.
The house, very great and rich,
Is fully stocked with delicacies.
Taking a priceless jewel,
[The rich man] attaches it to his friend’s garment inside,
Then, leaving it in silence, he goes away,
While his friend, lying down at the time, is aware of nothing...
He is unaware that inside his garment
There is a priceless jewel.
The close friend who gave him the jewel
Later sees this poor man and,
Having sternly rebuked him,
Shows him the jewel tied to the garment.
The poor man, seeing this jewel,
Is overjoyed at heart.
In his wealth, he comes to own various precious objects,
Able to satisfy his five desires at will.
We also are thus,
For the World-Honored
One throughout the long night of time,
Ever in his pity teaching and converting,
Has caused us to plant the seeds of the unexcelled vow.²⁸⁹

Taking this parable from the *Lotus Sutra* into account, we can better understand Tamakazura’s soteriological difficulties. She strives for enlightenment, but like the poor man of the *Lotus Sutra*, she is a traveler who is unaware of her inner-Buddha nature due to delusion. In *Genji monogatari* she travels from dangers in Kyūshū to the relative safety of

²⁸⁹ Hurvitz, *Lotus Sutra*, 152-3.

Hatsusedera; from there she travels to the complexities of court, a court where Genji holds sway. There she is eventually reinstated by Genji in her true-identity as Tō no Chūjō's daughter. In the Noh, her spirit returns to the original site of pilgrimage to seek freedom from constant suffering along the *rokudō*. Zenchiku's primary interest may have been in demonstrating the dualistic/non-dualistic nature of her character based on etymological allegoresis of the characters of her name vis-à-vis his own understanding of the sacred site of Hatsusedera and its cult: *tama* (玉, Jewel of Enlightenment) and *kazura* (蔓, Vines of Lustful Attachment, which will be examined below.) This reading of the characters of Tamakazura's name would account for the juxtaposition of her spirit onto the sacred space of Hatsusedera in a manner so dissimilar from the *honzetsu* of *Genji monogatari*, yielding a *shite* embodying seemingly conflicting elements of religious pilgrimage, the possession of hidden enlightenment nature, and a lustful female karmic sin that can only be broken down and overcome with the power of the Dharma via the *Lotus Sutra* performed ritually at the sacred space and location of Hatsusedera by a Buddhist ascetic.

The power held within the name "Tamakazura" is critical to an understanding of not only the narrative and poetic structure of Zenchiku's play but also religious concepts that defined medieval *honji suijaku* religiosity. In chapter 1, I examined Zenchiku's etymological allegoresis of the title for the *Lotus Sutra* and how it was connected to the "Devadatta" chapter, clearly demonstrating the importance of understanding the role paronomasia plays in the medieval Japanese understanding of poetic and religious language. This use of paronomasia in a religious context, especially concerning the extraction of soteriological meaning, holds a long precedent in the canon of premodern Japanese literature. In his study "Kotoba asobi to bukkyō no kankei: *Kokinwakashū* butsumei wo tegakari to shite," Ishii Kōsei analyzes the frequent use of paronomasia within the Buddhist poetry of the *Kokinwakashū*, specifically how the creation of allegorical imagery within poetic language

was critical to establishing a poetic lexicon of phrases imbued with innate Buddhist meaning. Ishii's location of this type of paronomasic allegoresis early in the *chokusenwakashū* tradition demonstrates the centrality of poetry, the backbone of the textual tradition of Noh theater, in the genesis of esoteric meaning in premodern Japanese religion. By the Muromachi period, esoteric knowledge of the meaning of key words was of the utmost importance. Writing on the subject, Susan Blakeley Klein states,

The basic assumption that correct analysis of characters can yield insight into (and even power over) absolute and phenomenal reality also underlies the secret literary commentaries with which Zenchiku was familiar. For example, although elsewhere in the *Sanjōnishi* lineage *Waka chiken shū* allegoresis is not employed as a methodology, in the introduction the discussion of the meaning the title of *Ise monogatari* [Tales of Ise] emphasized that a correct interpretation of names and graphs is centrally important: "The myriad things arise from their names, in accordance with the principle that the name is the result of the essential nature of the graph." For esoteric literary commentaries in particular, this principle is fundamental; their approach to textual analysis depends on a non-arbitrary relationship between linguistic signs and both absolute and phenomenal reality.²⁹⁰

We can see how Zenchiku's esoteric understanding of textual analysis may in turn be applied to his dramatic works when presented with plays such as *Tamakazura*, a female-spirit whose name forms the dramatic, ontological, and soteriological core of the work.

Now that her spirit has revealed the first component of her name, the "Jewel of the Buddhist Law," Tamakazura leaves the monk, ending the first act of the drama. The *aikyōgen* interlude follows, where a man of the Hatsuse region relates the story of Tamakazura to the monk, confirming the truth of what he has just encountered. This leads into the second act of the play, where Tamakazura's spirit is revealed in her true form. From a dramaturgical standpoint, this revelation of the *shite* is the highlight of *mugen* Noh and features a change by the actor into a more elaborate costume backstage during the *aikyōgen* interlude. Complex dance pieces performed by the *shite*, accompanied by chanting from the chorus, are foregrounded in the second act of the drama. The beginning of the second act in many *mugen*

²⁹⁰ Klein, *Dancing the Dharma*, chapter 3.

Noh frequently begins with the monk performing the *kuyō* ritual requested by the spirit. In the case of *Tamakazura*, this *kuyō* piece is irregular as it features ritual language quoted from the *Lotus Sutra*:

WAKI: However heavy her sins from former lives may be,
The bright sun will not fail to cast its light,
The bright sun will not fail to cast its light.
Illuminating by the flame of the Law conveying
The infinite vow of Mercy and Compassion,
I will pray on behalf of her departed soul,
I will pray on behalf of her departed soul.²⁹¹

These lines are taken directly from, “The Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One”, (Ch. 21, scroll 7):

As the bright light of the sun and the moon, can clear away all darkness and obscurity,
so this man, going through the world, can extinguish the darkness of the beings.²⁹²

This is a radical departure from the usual structure of a *mugen* Noh play in which the *waki* character, usually a Buddhist monk, prays for a spirit. Typically, only the phrase *tomurafu* (吊ふ, to chant ritually) is used to indicate that some type of Buddhist memorial ritual or prayers has been performed by the monk character on behalf of the spirit. *Tamakazura* is far more explicit in its use of selected passages from the *Lotus Sutra* and the vow of Kannon (大悲大事, *daihi daiji*). This reinforces two key points: primacy of the sacred space and location of Hatsusedera and its Eleven-Headed Kannon, and *Tamakazura*’s inner Buddha Jewel nature as a main element of her soteriological status.

After the monk performs the ritual, the spirit re-emerges. She is no longer in the plain clothes of a boat-woman but in the sumptuous robe of an aristocratic court noblewoman with long tangled hair. It appears that the *Lotus Sutra* has also revealed the second element of *Tama-kazura*’s name and thus her ontology and soteriological status: the *kazura* (鬘), vines of clinging attachment and sinful lust, frequently represented as a woman’s long black hair:

²⁹¹ Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 123; Itō, *Yōkyokushū*, (*chū*), 327.

²⁹² Hurvitz, *Lotus Sutra*, 266.

CHORUS: The fickle life amid the dust I brush,

SHITE: and brush away but still the delusion lingers

CHORUS: on the long road to darkness,

SHITE: black as raven locks,

CHORUS: that never ends. The sleep-dishveled hair is
not held back, nor can I stop the troubled thoughts.²⁹³

This passage specifically describing two critical points that are causing the spirit of Tamakazura suffering: delusion and karma, which stick to the corporeal and spiritual body and cannot be brushed away. Second, this suffering appears to be caused primarily not by her own actions but by male lust projected upon her, despite her own will. In *Genji monogatari*, Tamakazura seems to evince little interest in the partners that Hikaru Genji tries to foist upon her, yet on the surface of the Noh play, she appears to have internalized the sexual obsession of men into her sense of self, directly effecting her soteriological status. Rajyashee Pandey provides supporting evidence for this idea in her analysis of how tangled hair is understood negatively by women in *Genji monogatari*:

In the *Genji* women rarely associate their hair with an experience of a love that is mutually shared. It is through an apprehension of its erotic possibilities that women come to an understanding not of the pleasures but rather of the anxieties generated by amorous relationships with men; more often than not, these entanglements serve as reminders of the fundamentally unstable nature of human ties, marked as they are by change and uncertainty.²⁹⁴

We have already seen a similar transference of the sin of lust onto the object of that lust in the *Kusō shi emaki* (Nine Meditations on Death Scroll) that transformed Ono no Komachi into a decaying corpse; such transference would seem to be structurally built into Buddhism. This type of transference may be at work in Zenchiku's play, as is seen in the following passage:

CHORUS: hatred for neither the world of love nor men,
must I feel, though I might wish otherwise,
it is for my own sins alone that I am punished.

²⁹³ Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 124; Itō, *Yōkyokushū (chū)*, 327-8.

²⁹⁴ Pandey, *Perfumed Sleeves and Tangled Hair*, 49.

Behold a figure repenting for all the scandal,
the uncontrolled passion welling up inside
like water bursting forth between rocks,
or burning so with desire that my soul seemed to wander off-
though carefully concealed, a jewel revealed,
in a turmoil over fireflies.
Disgraceful, shameful, is the image thus revealed.²⁹⁵

Itō Masayoshi and Kinoshita Yoshimi locate the main source of Tamakazura's karmic suffering as being Hikaru Genji's attempts to lure multiple men to her for a political marriage, including Prince Hotaru and even her half-brother Kashiwagi, the latter violating incest taboos.²⁹⁶ Kinoshita sees the line "water bursting forth between rocks" (*iwa moru mizu*), a direct allusion to a poetic exchange in *Genji monogatari* referencing such scandals leaking out, to the fact that Tamakazura was (unknowingly) being courted by her half-brother.²⁹⁷ This condition combined with other incest overtones from the original *Genji monogatari honzetsu*, and Tamakazura's female corporality combined with the second element of her name, *kazura*, may have forced her into a negative soteriological status. In the metaphysical world of Zenchiku's dramaturgy, lust appears to operate like a permanent pollution, an irreversible *kegare*. This impurity cannot be rubbed off, no matter how you try and can only be washed away through the saving Law of the *Lotus Sutra* as administered by the monk. However, this may only ritually take place once Tamakazura's full ontology and soteriological status, the command over her name through esoteric allegoresis, is fully achieved:

CHORUS: Casting off the thrall of delusion,
Tamakazura's soul attains the jewel of Truth,
Tamakazura's soul attains the jewel of Truth,
and the long dream came to an end.²⁹⁸

The more exact mechanism for how that release from delusion occurs is left unspecified, which is typical in Noh theater. However, my overall argument has demonstrated that within

²⁹⁵ Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 124; Itō, *Yōkyokushū (chū)*, 328.

²⁹⁶ Headnote #6, Itō, *Yōkyokushū (chū)*, 328; Kinoshita, *Tamakazura no kōsō*, 4-5.

²⁹⁷ Kinoshita, "Tamakazura no kōsō," 4-5.

²⁹⁸ Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 124; Itō, *Yōkyokushū (chū)*, 328.

the sacred space and location of Hatsusedera and the Eleven-Headed Kannon who intercedes for women and the intonation of lines from the *Lotus Sutra* that hold command over her name, working to free Tamakazura from the clinging vines (*kazura*) of her supposed lustful nature, so that her hidden true Buddha nature (*tama*) is revealed, thus allowing her to attain enlightenment.

Tamakazura: Soteriological Status and Convergence

The play *Tamakazura* sees the convergence of all the elements that impact a female-spirit's soteriological status and impede (or support) her working towards enlightenment. Zenchiku's esoteric allegoresis of Tamakazura's name, based in part on her original *honzetsu* as found in the *Genji*; the centrality of the sacred space and location of the Hatsusedera complex and its Eleven-Headed Kannon image in providing positive karmic influence; the allusion from the "Tamakazura" chapter establishing the Tamakazura spirit as a religious pilgrim; and the Buddhist monk *waki*'s use of ritual language from the *Lotus Sutra*. As a result, the female-spirit of *Tamakazura* is able to cast off her deep delusion and achieve enlightenment, in stark contrast to the continuing stasis and soteriological suffering of the Yang spirit at the close of *Yōkihi*. In the final Zenchiku female-spirit play under analysis, a different *Genji*-based female-spirit will be assessed: the iconic Lady Rokujō as featured in *Nonomiya*. A play noted for its poetic beauty and meditations on longing, the primary focus of *Nonomiya*'s dramatic action also turns on the soteriological status of the female-spirit *shite*. While at the end of *Yōkihi* Yang Guifei continues to be firmly trapped by her karmic attachments in Penglai, an ostensible heaven that seems more like a hell, Tamakazura transcends the entangling "vine" of her karmic attachments (*kazura*) to find the "Jewel of the Law" (*tama*). When turning to *Nonomiya*, we will find a third, differing view of the potential for female enlightenment: Lady Rokujō is caught in a more ambiguous sacred space, that of a

personal shrine, thereby revealing multiple points of contention at the heart of the medieval *honji suijaku* paradigm.

Section 3: *Nonomiya*- Karmic Attachment, Thresholds, and Returning

Poetic Beauty and Spiritual Ambiguity

In Konparu Zenchiku's female-spirit Noh plays, two divergent examples of feminine soteriology have been examined. In *Yōhiki*, the Yang Guifei persona played by the *shite* resides in a hybrid Chinese/Japanese heaven realm while possessing the ontological status of a celestial being. However, she appears unable to achieve *jōbutsu* (enlightenment) due to several mitigating factors: her present heaven realm being un conducive to the practice of the Dharma; her own karmic sin of attachment is too great; and finally, although the Daoist wizard, played by the *waki*, is an powerful shamanic ascetic able to transverse multiple realms of existence on a "dream-vision"/mantic journey, he does not possess the ritual skill or spiritual knowledge required to actualize her enlightenment. In contrast, these elements all point toward the positive in the play *Tamakazura*. First, the dramatic action of the work is set on the Hatsuse River leading to the sacred Hatsusedera complex, where the miraculous image of its Eleven Headed Kannon is enshrined. Second, even though the central character of Tamakazura is understood as suffering from the serious karmic sin of feminine lust, her name represents a Buddhological paradox (*tama* [Jewel of the Law] and *kazura* [vines, signifying lust]). This dual nature provides her with an innate soteriological status that aids her in overcoming negative feminine karma and pursuing a path toward enlightenment. Finally, the *waki* in *Tamakazura* is a Buddhist monk in possession of special spiritual knowledge and powerful ritual language from the *Lotus Sutra*. These factors combine to allow true Buddhist enlightenment for the *shite*. *Nonomiya*, the last of Zenchiku's female-spirit plays considered in this study, also features *nyonin jōbutsu* as the center of its dramatic conflict, highlighting

the iconic literary persona of Lady Rokujō from *Genji monogatari*. Noted for a rich poetic beauty (*yugen*) that typifies the Muromachi artistic aesthetic, the soteriological turmoil within *Nonomiya* falls somewhere in the middle of the spectrum between *Yōkihi* and *Tamakazura*. On one hand, *Yōkihi* focuses on the main character's obsessive sorrow over parting combined with fatalistic meditations on the *rokudō*. In contrast, *Tamakazura* presents the female-spirit as supernatural pilgrim. As we shall see, the understanding of Lady Rokujō's soteriological predicament as presented in *Nonomiya* is intimately linked to several factors specific to that play. First, the play's *honzetsu* in medieval *renga* handbooks devoted to the poems and prose of the *Genji*. Second, conflicting issues involving the *honji suijaku* paradigm as it relates to sacred space and geographic location in which the play itself is set, the Nonomiya (Shrine of the Fields) setting from the "Sakaki" (榊の巻, The Green Branch) chapter in *Genji monogatari*. Third, the complex ontological and soteriological elements of Lady Rokujō herself that determine her soteriological status.

The *Honzetsu* of *Nonomiya*: *Genji monogatari*, Medieval Poetics, and the Establishment of Lady Rokujō's Karmic Attachment

Similar to the *honzetsu* of *Tamakazura*, the primary source for Zenchiku's *Nonomiya* is Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji monogatari*. Also, like the former play, Zenchiku probably did not utilize the original Heian period text, instead relying on *renga* handbooks and plot digests devoted to the *Genji* as source material.²⁹⁹ The dramatic action of *Nonomiya* follows a standard *mugen* Noh plot structure, opening with a traveling Buddhist monk (the *waki*) who is visiting famous sites around the capital of Kyōto. He decides to see the fields of Saga and is surprised to find the temporary Shine of the Fields (*nonomiya*), constructed as though in ancient (i.e. Heian) times. He decides that the traditional prohibitions associated with Ise Grand Shrine barring Buddhist practice and clergy from entering sites sacred to the sun

²⁹⁹ Goff, *Noh Drama and the Tale of Genji*, 27-8.

goddess Amaterasu (enshrined at Ise, 伊勢), do not preclude him from the sacred location. A female shrine attendant (the *shite*) appears and asks him why he has entered, asking him to leave. Stating he has only come to pay his respects, the monk inquires as to her identity. She tells him the story of Lady Rokujō, the mother of the former Priestess of Ise Grand Shrine, who broke with past precedent and accompanied her daughter first to the Shrine of the Fields, where the Priestess underwent purification rights, before journeying on to Ise. Lady Rokujō's reason for her drastic action was to remove herself from her difficult relationship with Hikaru Genji in Heian-kyō (present day Kyōto) and avoid further emotional pain and social embarrassment. The woman describes the Shrine of the Fields in its full autumnal splendor and reminisces about the occasion that Genji visited Rokujō in secret to bid her farewell. This passage features lush poetic images from the "Sakaki" chapter in *Genji* and is a demonstration of *yūgen* in full effect. The *shite* then hints at her true-identity as Rokujō and implores the *waki* to hold funerary services (*kuyō*) for her soul. After she fades into the shadows, the *waki* confers with a man of the area, played by the *aikyōgen*, who verifies the tale told by the ghostly women as factual, continuing Muromachi Third Category play's propensity for treating literary characters as historical figures.³⁰⁰ In *Nonomiya*'s second act, the *shite* emerges as Rokujō in her true form, reenacting the causation of her karmic attachment and delusion. Surprisingly, in *Nonomiya* this karmic attachment is depicted not as her continuing (but conflicted) love for Hikaru Genji as displayed in poetry from the "Sakaki" chapter, but through rhetorical framing of the famous "carriage fight" (*kuruma arasou*) that occurred during the Kamo Festival between Rokujō and Genji's principle wife Lady Aoi (*Aoi*

³⁰⁰ See chapter 2, section 6 for analysis of the Ono no Komachi figure and her malleable biographical information as a prototype for Third Category Noh plays featuring female-spirit personas.

no ue) in chapter 9 “Aoi” (葵の巻, Heart-to-Heart),³⁰¹ combined with poetic imagery of the “Parable of the Burning House” of the *Lotus Sutrā* (Ch. 3, scroll 2).³⁰² In *Genji monogatari*, this incident caused Rokujō’s living spirit to wander from her body against her will, ultimately attacking and killing Aoi via spirit possession (*mononoke*). The “Aoi” chapter was also the *honzeitsu* for Kan’ami’s famous Fifth Category *kiri* (Demon) Noh “Aoi no ue” (Lady Aoi). This earlier play may have served as inspiration for the second act of *Nonomiya*, although the presentation of the “carriage fight” incident and its associated imagery is much calmer in Zenchiku’s play as it does not focus on the physical violence of the incident, or the spiritual malignance of *mononoke* and the subsequent exorcism of a demonic Rokujō.³⁰³ *Nonomiya* concludes with the ghostly form of Rokujō moving in and out of the Shrine of the Field’s *torii* spiritual gateway as the chorus intones allusions to the “Parable of the Burning House” chapter from the *Lotus Sutra*. The entire atmosphere is one of autumnal longing for the past³⁰⁴ while conveying a more ambivalent Buddhist sentiment than either *Yōkihi* or

³⁰¹ The Kamo Festival (加茂齋, *Kamosai*), now called the Aoi Festival (葵祭), is still performed today in Kyoto. It was held on the day of the Rooster (酉, *tori*) in the Fourth Month to appease the Kamo deity and to ward off epidemic and natural disaster. During the Heian period, it was a major event, involving a procession of a courtiers from the Palace to the Lower Kamo Shrine, and then to the Upper Kamo Shrine. Onlookers from across the city would line the procession route. Ōno, *et al.*, *Iwanami kogo jiten hoteiban*, 341. In *Genji monogatari*, (Ch. 9, “Aoi”), Rokujō wished to attend the festival to see Genji, who was taking part in the parade. So as not to draw attention to herself, she was traveling in a small, unmarked carriage. To secure a better view of the festival proceedings and see Genji in the main procession, Aoi’s ox-cart attendants shoved the Rokujō’s cart out of the way and into the mire. Koyama and Satō, *Yōkyokushū*, vol. 1, 308. Aoi was aware of her husband’s affair with Rokujō and this may have encouraged the incident. As this occurred in a public space in the view of other elite aristocrats, Rokujō bore intense shame as a result. The incident highlighted Genji’s poor treatment of Rokujō in the polygamous marriage system and her own marginalized status as the widow of a Crown Prince; her ultra-elite status made such rough victimization even more damaging.

³⁰² Hurvitz, *Lotus Sutra*, 47-77.

³⁰³ Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 129.

³⁰⁴ Janet Goff sees a socio-political reading within the pronounced longing within *Nonomiya* as form of idealized nostalgia: “In a larger sense, the longing for the past that pervades the play may be seen as an expression of a general yearning for the idealized world of the Heian court in the Muromachi period, an age plagued by warfare and destruction.” *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 128-9.

Tamakazura, with the ultimate soteriological status of the Rokujō spirit seemingly unknown at the drama's conclusion.

As noted above, *Nonomiya*'s *honzetsu* draws heavily from poetic imagery and narrative details of the "Sakaki" and "Aoi" chapters of *Genji monogatari*. As discussed in detail by Janet Goff, the play's primary source was most likely medieval *Genji* poetry and art manuals used by authors and artists to aid in the composition of new literary and visual works.³⁰⁵ The dramatic structure of *Nonomiya*'s first act closely mirrors a synopsis of the "Sakaki" chapter from the *renga* manual *Hikaru Genji ichibu renga yoriai no koto* (光源氏一部連歌寄合之事, On Passages from the Shining Genji for Linked Verse Meetings), including the manual's central focus on the sacred *sakaki* evergreen branch as the primary poetic image in the chapter.³⁰⁶ The poetic imagery that forms the *honkadori* textual weave of *Nonomiya* is also aligned with established *renga* rules of poetic association, where set poetic words and phrases must be linked together to adhere to the composition rules of the art form. For example, according to *Hikaru Genji ichibu renga yoriai no koto*'s entry on the "Sakaki" chapter:

The following words may be linked to "Shrine in the Fields": *night with an evening moon, low brushwood fence, rough-hewn wooden torii, pine crickets, reed-covered fields, parting at dawn, autumn grasses, sound of insects, Suzuka, river/Ise far away, many rapids*. The wretchedness of the sky during a journey and parting regretfully at dawn should be associated with Ise.³⁰⁷

The italicized phrases in the quotation above are utilized in *Nonomiya*. As Goff makes clear, *renga* manuals and their gleaning of poetic images from the *Genji* provided the main sources for *Nonomiya*, rather than the original Heian period text. This separates *Nonomiya* from the original textual source of the *Genji* not only in time and space but also in the actual *honzetsu* potentially utilized in composition. Miyake Akiko has attempted to rectify this fact

³⁰⁵ Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 128.

³⁰⁶ Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji* 78.

³⁰⁷ Translation from Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 79.

through her comparative analysis of the character of Rokujō in the original *Genji* text with the *shite* in *Nonomiya*. She states that for initial readers and viewers, the divide between the two figures initially appears great, with the Rokujō of the *Genji* best described as a proactive character who makes active life-decisions while the *shite* of *Nonomiya* may appear as an inactive, passive figure typifying the medieval aesthetic of Buddhist impermanence.³⁰⁸ She argues that upon further cross-referencing of the two texts, however, that this is not the case. The *shite* in *Nonomiya* was constructed by Zenchiku to embody five critical essences of the original *Genji* character: Rokujō's rare pride and bearing; her obsessive brooding; her hyper-awareness of society and social status within it; Rokujō's representation as the most refined woman of her era; and her personal economic power.³⁰⁹ All five of these distinctive traits that delineate Rokujō's unique personality in *Genji* are also present in the text of *Nonomiya*, thereby firmly connecting the play and its *shite* with the soteriological status of the original character. As such, *Nonomiya* represents the soteriological conflict of Rokujō's spirit as she grapples with the problematic nature of the karmic attachment from her past life as enacted in the distinctive sacred space and location of the Shrine of the Fields, which may in fact be an extension of her own spiritual essence manifested by her memory and longing as she is trapped between realms of existence.

Lady Rokujō: Caught Between Realms of Existence

The themes of memory, longing, and the metaphysical conflict of being caught between realms of existence are the central concerns of *Nonomiya*. Lady Rokujō's spirit appears to be returning to the Shrine of the Fields, which has somehow anachronistically appeared in Saga Fields, to commemorate her longing for Hiraku Genji. However, this longing has trapped her in the karmic sin of love-attachment, which is frequently gendered

³⁰⁸ Miyake, "Rokujō miyasudokoro no henbō," 77.

³⁰⁹ Miyake, "Rokujō miyasudokoro no henbō," 77-9.

female in Buddhist discourse. Due to this, she is suffering continued re-manifestation as a spirit in the human realm, and the associated pain of wandering along the *rokudō*, and seeks enlightenment to end this cycle of misery. She encounters the Buddhist monk, who possesses the spiritual and ritual means to secure her release. However, her spiritual status remains uncertain. A detailed analysis of key passages of *Nonomiya*, focusing on poetic and religious language used and how it addresses these key topics in the play, will bring about a clearer understanding of Rokujō's problematic soteriological status.

When the traveling monk played by the *waki* first appears on stage, he tells us that even though he has arrived at this location by accident, he will visit the famous Shrine of the Fields:

WAKI: As it is now the end of autumn,
I want to see the fields of Saga; I think I'll go there and look around.
When asking about this forest, I am told it
is the ancient remains of the Shrine of the Fields.
As chance has brought me here, I think I will go and see.³¹⁰

The fields and moors at Saga were to the southwest of Heian-kyō in Yamashiro province.³¹¹ Saga acts as an *utamakura* (歌枕, pillow word)³¹² for autumn, as its fields were a famous location for the beauty of autumn grasses and the songs of insects. These poetic images and their associations with autumn establish the overall aesthetic atmosphere of *Nonomiya*, grounding it firmly in the world of Heian period *waka* resonances and the “Sakaki” chapter of *Genji*. As mentioned above, the Nonomiya (Shrine of the Fields) of Saga was a temporary wooden shrine constructed during the Heian period to house an Imperial princess who had been selected to serve as the High Priestess of Ise Grand Shrine. She would spend a year purifying herself at this temporary shrine before making the long journey to the Grand

³¹⁰ All translations from *Nonomiya* are my own unless otherwise indicated. Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 67.

³¹¹ Headnote #2, Koyama and Satō, *Yōkyokushū*, vol.1, 299.

³¹² *Utamakura* (pillow words) is an important rhetorical tool in *waka* and by extension, *renga*. Place names often function as *utamakura* and carry pre-set poetic associations and resonances, giving a poem greater depth of meaning and intertextuality.

Shrine in Ise province (contemporary Mie prefecture), the main sacred site dedicated to worship of the sun goddess Amaterasu-ōmikami (天照大神), tutelary deity of the Imperial family.³¹³ The practice was supported by the aristocratic Fujiwara clan as part of their control of the Imperial court through marriage politics. By removing marriageable young Imperial princesses from the court due to enforced ritual obligations, their own daughters were guaranteed more secure marriages to the Imperial family. However, by the mid-Muromachi period and Zenchiku's lifetime, the practice of sending Imperial princesses to the Saga Nonomiya for purification had been abandoned for centuries. Furthermore, a temporary wooden shrine would not have left behind any remains such as foundation stones, fencing, the main *torii*, or the shrine sanctuary. The play thus begins with a setting that is already paradoxical: a temporary shrine from a fictional work whose ruins the monk character nevertheless believes he sees and can enter.

To understand this paradox, a reassessment should be made as to what elements fundamentally constitute the ontological components of the Rokujō *shite* as presented in *Nonomiya*. As the dramatic action of the play unfolds, the following narrative elements should be noted: the spirit of Rokujō mentions multiple times that she continues to maintain the shrine and perform rituals at it preserves the memory of the past. Additionally, how and why would a shrine, which in its original *Genji honzetsu* was a temporary religious structure, continue to exist hundreds of years later? One hypothetical argument is that the sacred space and location of the Nonomiya at the Saga Fields in Zenchiku's drama is in actuality a manifestation of Rokujō's spirit, appearing together with her ghostly form once a year on the anniversary of her meeting with Hikaru Genji. The shrine's anachronistic existence serves to emphasize the persistent and tortured nature of Rokujō's karmic attachment to this location and the past it represents. The possible veracity of this hypotheses as a major component of

³¹³ Headnote #3, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 67.

the soteriological status of the Rokujō *shite* of *Nonomiya* will be analyzed through a continued dissection of passages from play.

The next sequence of action sees the Buddhist monk approaching the shrine and deciding to enter, even though he is of the Buddhist clergy:

WAKI: When I come to see this forest, its *torii* of black evergreen wood
and low brushwood fence,
look just as they did in the past,
[*Folds his hands in the gasshō*³¹⁴ *position.*]
I wonder why they are here.
Well then, I'm thankful to have the opportunity
to come and worship now.
The Sacred Fence of Ise does not form a barrier,
the Teachings of the Law are straight as the road
I followed to visit here. Looking upon the scene of the shrine,
my mind is at peace in the evening,
my mind is at peace in the evening.³¹⁵

Here, the *waki* in his role as a Buddhist monk, takes his first step into the shrine. Following the theory that the shrine is a manifestation of Rokujō's ghost, the *waki* is also undertaking an ascetic's journey of contact with the spirit realm (possibly of *kamigakari*, spirit possession, coming into physical contact with the entity, and so on.) The fact that the monk feels it necessary to justify his entrance into the shrine is due to restrictions on Buddhism at the Ise Grand Shrine dating back to the Heian period; his justification is premised on the medieval *honji suijaku* paradigm and the mutually syncretic nature of Buddhism and *kami* worship. In this case, the monk argues that his affiliation with the Buddhist order should not hinder his access to a sacred site aligned with a major *kami* shrine complex. Buddhism and Ise *kami* worship have a long and complex history. Shintō scholar Itō Satoshi writes of their medieval era relationship,

Ryōbu Shintō played an essential role in the formation of Ise Shintō. Many scholars have argued that Ise Shintō constituted a reaction against *honji suijaku*

³¹⁴ *Gasshō* (合掌), palms pressed together in front of the chest, bowing slightly. A sign of reverence and focus in Buddhist practice; not to be confused with abject prayer. Also, used as a greeting or sign of a devotional request for spiritual assistance.

³¹⁵ Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 67-8.

thought, quoting from its secret texts (*Yamato-hime no mikoto seiki* and others) the phrase: ‘One must hide one’s breath concerning Buddhism.’ However, this phrase must be understood as a reference to the longstanding ritual taboo on Buddhism at Ise, and does not necessarily imply an anti-Buddhist stance. It is true that Buddhist phrases and Buddhist monks were tabooed in the context of *kami* ritual at Ise but, at the same time, Buddhism played an important role in the communal affairs and private lives of Ise priests, as is shown for example by the considerable numbers of Inner and Outer Shrine priests who took monastic vows after their retirement from shrine service. The lineage-based and private involvement of Ise priests with local Buddhist temples provided a solid basis for Buddhist speculation about the Ise shrines.³¹⁶

The above description of medieval Buddhist involvement with the Ise *kami* worship tradition illustrates the *waki*’s ability as a member of the medieval Buddhist establishment to transverse established taboos against Ise not only due to the all-encompassing *honji suijaku* paradigmatic environment of the era, but of the crucial role Buddhist practice played within the private lives of male members of the *kami* worship community, outside of their roles within official shrine ritual. It is critical to note that in *Nonomiya*, Rokujō’s spirit requests that the monk leave as she is about to perform sacred *kami* rituals at the Nonomiya. As noted above by Itō Satoshi, the presence of Buddhism was taboo at Ise during such rituals, adding credence to the *shite*’s concerns. Moreover, as seen in chapter 2, matters of ritual purification and gender-based religious issues were of great importance in *kami* worship. This was especially the case for female shrine attendants and shamans (*miko*), who were selected by the *kami* and ritually purified, and kept unexposed to potential sources of *kegare*.³¹⁷ This would have typified the experience of Rokujō’s daughter, an Imperial Princess, at the Nonomiya and later Ise Grand Shrine and by extension her mother, Rokujō. This lack of exposure to Buddhist discourse and practice was a matter of concern to Rokujō in *Genji monogatari*, as illustrated in chapter 14 “Miotsukushi” (漣標の巻, The Pilgrimage to Sumiyoshi) when she suddenly takes ill after returning from Ise with her daughter,

³¹⁶ Itō, “The Kami Merged with Buddhism,” 87.

³¹⁷ Blacker, *Catalpa Bow*, 114-5.

Her taste and flair had not deserted her, many distinguished gentlewomen and cultivated gentlemen gathered around her, and despite her apparent loneliness she was living pleasantly when, all at once, she fell gravely ill and sank into such despair that alarm over her years in so sinful a place decided her to become a nun.³¹⁸

Royall Tyler, the translator of the above passage from “Miotsukushi” annotates this passage with the following footnote, “The Ise Shrine, where taboo had cut her off from any contact with Buddhist teaching or practice.”³¹⁹ Upon her life-ending illness, the Rokujō character of *Genji* expressed grave worry over her soteriological status due to the time she spent at the Ise Grand Shrine and lack of access to the Buddhist Dharma and its active practice. From this we can extrapolate that the most effective means of ensuring her potentiality for *jōbutsu* so close to death was by taking the tonsure. This may indicate that during the Heian period, the felt divide between Buddhism and *kami* worship at Ise was deeper than in the medieval era. This important episode from the *Genji* adds an additional layer of dramatic irony to our reading of *Nonomiya*, as the distinctly Ise *kami* worship sacred space of the dramatic action stands in sharp contrast with the *Genji* Rokujō character’s dying wishes. In this light, the Shrine of the Fields itself may emanate as a representation of the karmic attachment suffered by the *Nonomiya* Rokujō *shite*, if not as part of her spiritual ontology. These are both possibilities due to the ambiguous nature of sacred space and location in Zenchiku’s play. What is textually concrete is the deep state of karmic longing felt by the *shite*.

Nonomiya’s dramatic action proceeds with the spirit of Rokujō, in the guise of the female shrine attendant holding a branch of *sakaki*,³²⁰ one of the main poetic elements of the “Sakaki” chapter of *Genji* and the Noh play. She gives a speech rich with associated poetic imagery that encapsulates *Nonomiya*’s primary dramaturgical concerns:

³¹⁸ Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji*, 293.

³¹⁹ Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji*, 293.

³²⁰ *Sakaki*, scientific name of *Cleyera japonica*, is an evergreen flowering tree native to East Asia. It is a sacred tree in *kami* worship (Shintō) with several ritual uses, such as an offering for the *kami* or as a ritual implement in ceremonies.

SHITE: The Shrine of the Fields that blossomed long ago,
 the Shrine of the Fields that blossomed long ago,
 what shall come after autumn ends and I grow weary?
 In this moment, as lonely autumn casts its shadows,
 more than ever, my sleeves wilt with dewy tears.
 The evening twilight crushes me,
 and the strength of the colors in my heart fades,
 as do the flowers of the myriad grasses:
 physical decay is the way of humanity.
 No one knows, but on this day every year,³²¹
 I return to this site of past days.
 At the Shrine of the Fields,
 the chill winds blow through the forest as autumn deepens,
 the chill winds blow through the forest as autumn deepens,
 and the colors that dyed my soul have disappeared.³²²
 And yet, why do I long for the past;
 enwrapped in memories like a robe of secretive grasses,³²³
 why do I come back in vain to this transitory world?
 How bitter it is to continue returning,³²⁴
 how bitter it is to continue returning.³²⁵

The first appearance of the *shite* firmly establishes the karmic suffering experienced by Rokujō via a dense weave of poetic allusions. Seasonal imagery illustrates the romantic and sexual bond she shared with Hikaru Genji and the current suffering of karmic attachment her spirit now experiences. The autumn flowers blossoming in the fields of Saga are Genji's

³²¹ Allusion to *Senzaiwakashū* (千載和歌集) 760 by Nijōin no Sannuki (二条院讃岐, 1141-1217),

<i>waga sode wa</i>	My sleeves are as
<i>shioi ni mienu</i>	a stone unseen below
<i>oki no seki no</i>	the waves at low tide;
<i>hito koso shiranu</i>	without anyone knowing,
<i>kawaku ma zo naki</i>	they had no time to dry.

Headnote, #7, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 68. Translation my own.

³²² Allusion to *Shinkokinwakashū* (新古今和歌集) 1336 by Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241):

<i>shirotae no</i>	The dew of parting
<i>sode no wakare ni</i>	falls upon my
<i>tsuyu ochite</i>	white cloth sleeves;
<i>mi ni shimu iro no</i>	the autumn wind howls
<i>aki kaze zo fuku</i>	as its color soaks my soul.

Headnote, #8, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 68-9. Translation my own.

³²³ *Shinobugusa*, literally “secret grass,” a symbol of secret love.

³²⁴ *Urami*, “bitter” or “hateful.” She is angry that her karmic attachment to her past romance with Genji causes her to continue to manifest at this place year after year instead of transmigrating into enlightenment.

³²⁵ Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 68.

affections, with the end of the season serving as a metaphor for Rokujō's impending loneliness now that their love has passed. The phrase "colors of the heart" (*kokoro no iro*) expresses Rokujō's feelings of love and intimacy, with "fading" (*utsuruhite*) of the flowers demonstrating Genji's fading affections towards her. Finally, and most pointedly, Rokujō expresses her bitterness at how she continues to return over and over to this world as an immaterial spirit.³²⁶ In this introductory passage from the *shite*, we are presented with natural setting and location as allegorical to the emotional state of the female-spirit, the root cause of her karmic suffering, along with the ontological and soteriological problems of continuous returning as a spirit. This prefigures Rokujō's soteriological conflict as central to the dramaturgy of *Nonomiya*.

However, despite Rokujō's bitterness at her entrapment by karmic attachment, the entrance of the *waki* in the form of the Buddhist monk, an ascetic who may be able to offer spiritual aid in the form *kuyō* services, is initially met with distrust. When Rokujō first encounters the monk, and explains her purpose at the Shine of the Fields, she informs him that while Imperial princesses are no longer being sent to Ise Grand Shrine, she still tends the sacred location (and her own memory), for one purpose:

Woman: Today is the Seventh Day of the Ninth Month,
and to commemorate the past every year, even without anyone knowing,
I purify the shrine and perform the sacred rites.
For an unknown wanderer like you to come here is an offense.
Go back from whence you came as soon as possible!

The Seventh Day of the Ninth Month (by the traditional East Asian lunar calendar) is the anniversary of when Hikaru Genji visited Rokujō at the Shrine of the Fields in "Sakaki" from *Genji monogatari*. It is a day of remembrance for Rokujō's spirit, when she and possibly also the Shrine of the Fields manifest on the Saga. The original socio-historical context in the *Genji* behind the spirit of Rokujō warning the Buddhist monk not to enter the

³²⁶ *Yuki kaeru koso urami nare*. Itō, *Yōkyokushū*, (*ge*), 68.

Nonomiya have been examined above. Noh theater scholars have handled this passage in various ways, such as explaining that a wandering Buddhist monk would be discouraged from entering the Nonomiya due to his lack of connection to the Ise Grand Shrine or the Imperial court;³²⁷ or that his status as an ordained Buddhist clergy member would have forbidden entrance during the Heian period due to being contamination to the *kami* who resided there.³²⁸ I would pose that as this Nonomiya is an phenomenological extension of the Rokujō spirit’s ontology (i.e. part of her spiritual heart-mind) and where she enacts her karmic attachment to her former lover from the past (Hikaru Genji), it is a private sacred space that would be violated by intrusions from the present age and outside persons. The anachronistic elements of the Nonomiya as presented in Zenchiku’s drama and textual evidence present this as a possibility.

This is further established by *Nonomiya*’s central poetic image, which serves as the focus of the Rokujō spirit’s karmic attachment, the *sakaki* branch exchanged between Hikaru Genji and Rokujō:

SHITE: Radiant Genji visited here on this day,
the Seventh Day of the Ninth Month.
At that time, he held out a small branch of *sakaki*;
when he thrust it within the Shrine’s sacred fence,
the Imperial Consort immediately responded,
“What was it that made you
mistakenly break off *sakaki*?
When there is no cedar
by the sacred fence
as a sign for you to enter.”³²⁹

³²⁷ Headnote #14, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 69.

³²⁸ Headnote #19, Koyama and Satō, *Yōkyokushū*, vol. 1, 301.

³²⁹ A variation on Rokujō’s response poem to Genji in the “Sakaki” chapter of *Genji monogatari*. The poem itself contains an allusion to *Kokinwakashū* 982, attributed to the Miwa deity:

<i>Waga miho wa</i>	My humble cottage is at
<i>Miwa no yama moto</i>	the base of Mount Miwa.
<i>koishiku wa</i>	If you long for me,
<i>toburai kimase</i>	please come visit;
<i>sugi tateru kado</i>	a cedar stands at the gate.

Headnote #11, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 73. Translation my own.

This was the poem she composed that day.³³⁰

This is the central poem and part of the opening scene from the “Sakaki” chapter that embodies the tragic love affair between Hikaru Genji and Lady Rokujō. In the original *Genji* text, the sorrowful autumnal beauty, metaphoric for the psychological state of the parting lovers, is described prior to the above *sakaki*-exchange poem between Hikaru Genji and Rokujō. It considered to be one of the poetic highlights of the chapter;

Melancholy overwhelmed him as soon as he set out across the moor’s vast expanse. The autumn flowers were dying; among the brakes of withering sedge, insects’ cries were faint and few; and through the wind’s sad sighing among the pines there reached him at times the sound of instruments, although so faintly he could not say what the music was. The scene had an intensely eloquent beauty.... Within a low, frail, brushwood fence stood a scattering of board-roofed buildings, very lightly built. The unbarked *tori* evoked a holy awe that reproved his own concerns, and the priests clearing their throats here and there or conversing with their fellows gave the precincts and air all their own. The fire lodge glowed dimly. With so few people about, a deep quiet reigned, and the thought that she had spent days and months here alone with her cares moved him to keen sympathy.³³¹

This narrative order is inverted in *Nonomiya*: the above *sakaki*-exchange poem is given *first* followed by a description of the Nonomiya utilizing poetic imagery taken from the above passage from “Sakaki.” Janet Goff sees Zenchiku’s inversion of this sequence in the textual structure of the play as supporting Rokujō’s soteriological status as defined by karmic attachment:

The foregrounding of Lady Rokujō’s poem, a function of its placement *before* the description of the fields of Saga, heightens its effect as a sign of her attachment. The temporal distance separating the world of the play from the original story and presentation of the episode from Lady Rokujō’s perspective, in turn, have altered the significance of the *sakaki*. As Genji foresaw long ago, its color did not change. But everything else, the grasses and trees and he himself had—everything, that is, except Lady Rokujō’s lingering attachment. The original referent, Genji’s constancy, has been replaced by Lady Rokujō’s attachment to the *sakaki* because of the memories it holds.³³²

³³⁰ Itō, *Yōkyōkushū* (*ge*), 69.

³³¹ Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji*, 193-4.

³³² Goff, *Noh Drama and The Tale of Genji*, 129-30.

The depth of the Rokujō spirit’s attachment is expressed through her paradoxical statements concerning her soteriological status: although she expresses her bitterness at continuing to return to this world as a ghost in the opening passage, she explicitly states to the *waki* that as it is the Seventh Day of the Ninth Month, she must faithfully commemorate her last meeting with Hikaru Genji, and is physically and metaphorically clinging to a *sakaki* branch as a symbol of this delusive attachment. Zenchiku’s rhetorical inversion of the original passages of the “Sakaki” chapter to reinforce Rokujō’s viewpoint and emotional state serves to emphasize this. The poetic imagery originally presented in the opening of the “Sakaki” chapter describing the autumnal beauty of the fields of Saga are next in the dramatic sequence of *Nonomiya* and are reserved for the heart of the first act of the play, the *kuse* passage:

CHORUS: still the bonds between them endured and endured,
indeed, he did not abandon her as someone cruel might have.
To the distant Shrine in the Fields,
deeply moved, his heart pushed through the fields of grasses,
the autumn flowers were all withering,
the insects’ songs were faint,
only the echo of the wind in the pines,
on that lonely road,
in autumn, where sadness has no end.
His Lordship, came here to visit,
and with profound emotion, in several ways,
through many dewy words,
revealed his intimate feelings.³³³

The above passage functions rhetorically in a similar manner to its *honzetsu* from *Genji*: it serves to represent the emotional states of Lady Rokujō and Hikaru Genji through evocative poetic metaphor on the melancholy beauty of the fields of Saga in autumn. However, as delineated by Janet Goff above, Zenchiku’s highly effective rhetorical inversion of this descriptive passage with the *sakaki*-exchange poem places emphasis squarely on the Rokujō spirit and her karmic attachment. It is this rhetorical construction, utilization of *honzetsu* and *honkadori* from the “Sakaki” chapter of *Genji*, and the criticality of the *Nonomiya* itself as

³³³ Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 70-1.

ontologically part of the Rokujō spirit that prefigures the female soteriological predicament as the main dramaturgic concern of Zenchiku's *Nonomiya*.

The play's first act draws to a close with the *shite* slowly revealing her identity as the spirit of Rokujō and imploring the monk to hold the customary *kuyō* services for her soul. In the interlude, the monk speaks to a local villager (the *aikyōgen*) who relates the story of Rokujō and Hikaru Genji based only on the "Sakaki" chapter of *Genji monogatari*. The second act of the play reopens with the Buddhist monk engaged in the ascetic duty of undergoing a dream-vision journey to re-connect with the female-spirit and holding *kuyō* services her soul. In comparison with *Tamakazura*, which utilizes specific ritual language from the *Lotus Sutra* to enable the release of the female-spirit, no such language is present in *Nonomiya*. The dream-vision and *kuyō* in *Nonomiya* are presented thus:

WAKI: I will spread,
my humble robe like moss under a tree,
my humble robe like moss under a tree,
on a grass mat of similar color.
Thinking of the past through the night,
I shall perform rites for her release,
I shall perform rites for her release.³³⁴

It is within this dream-vision that the dramatic action of the second act of *Nonomiya* takes place. Replete with poetic images of carriages, the *honzetsu* for this act shifts from the "Sakaki" chapter the *Genji* to the previous "Aoi" chapter, as well as the "Parable of the Burning House" (The Burning House) from the *Lotus Sutra*. One of many allegorical parables found within the text of *Lotus Sutrā*, "The Burning House" explains the Mahāyāna Buddhist concept of expedient means (方便, Sk. *upāya*; J. *hōben*) and is one of the most quoted and philosophically important concepts in the entire *sutrā*. Within the context of the *sutrā*, the Buddha uses it to explain the function of expedient means to his disciples:

A rich man had a very large house. The house had only one entrance, and the

³³⁴ Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 73.

timber of which it was made had dried out thoroughly over the years. One day the house caught fire, and the rich man's many children, heedless of the fire, continued to play in the house. Their father called to them from outside that the house was afire and that they would perish in the flames if they did not come out. The children, not knowing the meaning of 'fire' or 'perish,' continued to play as before. The man called out once more, 'Come out, children, and I will give you ox-drawn carriages, goat-drawn carriages, and deer-drawn carriages!' Tempted by the desire for new playthings, the children left the burning house, only to find a single great ox-drawn carriage awaiting them.³³⁵

Expedient means are used to lure one from the dangers of attachment and other karmic sins, symbolized by the burning house, to the single Great Vehicle of the Mahāyāna, symbolized by the single great ox-drawn carriage at the close of the passage. Within the context of the second act of *Nonomiya*, *honkadōri* allusions to "The Burning House" and carriage wheels symbolize that soteriological distress felt by those caught in the metaphorical burning house of attachment and karmic sin; the turning wheel of the Mahāyāna Dharma; and the six-realm wheel of the *rokudō*, where Rokujō's spirit has suffered through repeatedly returning to the human realm as a ghost.

By doubling poetic images of carriages from the narrative *honzetsu* in the "Aoi" chapter with "The Burning House" parable, the second act of *Nonomiya* highlights the Rokujō spirit's increasingly ambivalent soteriological status. This is displayed in the central passage of the second act, which recounts the "Aoi" chapter's humiliating "carriage battle," highlighted with desperate pleas for soteriological aid:

CHORUS: men seized the carriage's shafts,
 and they shoved it far behind the crowd.
 My carriage was as powerless
 as the status I myself had come to know.
 Yet when I think on it,
 no sin escapes retribution.
 I remain as wretched as that small ox-drawn cart,
 when will it stop going around and around?
 Please illuminate and dispel this obsessive delusion!
 Please illuminate and dispel this obsessive delusion!³³⁶

³³⁵ Hurvitz, *Lotus Sutra*, 55-6.

³³⁶ Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 74.

In the line, “that small ox-drawn cart, when will it stop going around and around?”³³⁷ Rokujō is directly relating her soteriological status with the eternal cycle of the *rokudō*, where she is not allowed to transmigrate into *jōbutsu*, but forced to return to the human realm as a spirit and perpetually experience pain. The play closes with Rokujō’s spirit continuing to long for the memory of Hikaru Genji within the autumnal beauty of the Shrine of the Fields. Finally, she performs a *ha no mai* dance (破ノ舞) and recites;

CHORUS: From long ago, this place was
dedicated to the most sacred
Divine Winds³³⁸ of Ise.
Her figure moves
in and out of the *tori* gate
on the road of life and death.³³⁹
The gods have not accepted her
it seems,
and once again she enters
the carriage.
Has she gone forth from
the Gate of the Burning House?
Has she gone forth from
the Gate of the Burning House?³⁴⁰

The closing passage of *Nonomiya* is heavy with religious images relating to crossing thresholds within the Buddhological and *kami* worship aspects of the *honji suijaku* paradigm, illustrating the lingering ambiguity surrounding Rokujō’s soteriological status at the end of the play. She appears to be trapped or impeded specifically by major structures associated with Ise *kami* worship, “the figure moving in and out of the *torii* gates of the Ise’s Inner and Outer shrines,”³⁴¹ Zenchiku’s preoccupation with sacred space and location as it relates to ritual purity is represented in this passage. According to Noh scholar Itō Masayoshi, Rokujō’s spirit is protected by the *kami* of both Ise’s Inner and Outer shrines as long as she remains

³³⁷ *Mi wa naho ushi no oguruma, meguri meguri kite itsu madezo*, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 74.

³³⁸ *Kamikaze*, an *utamakura* for Ise. Headnote #2, Koyama and Satō, 309.

³³⁹ *Shōji no michi* (road of life and death). Rokujō acquired ritual and spiritual pollution as her spirit wandered on it. Headnote, #19, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 75.

³⁴⁰ Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), p. 75.

³⁴¹ *Uchito no torii ni ideiru sugata wa*, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 75.

within the space demarcated by the Shrine of the Field's *torii* gate. However, she becomes ritually and spiritual polluted (i.e. *kegare*) once she sets out from this protected sacred space.³⁴² As discussed in chapter 2, *kegare* was a serious issue in *kami* worship, especially for women, who were seen as biologically predisposed to *kegare* within the medieval *honji suijaku* paradigm. In the Muromachi period, such spiritual contamination would have dire consequences for the soteriological status of Rokujō's spirit. As indicated in the following line of the above passage, her spirit remains "on the road of life and death" (生死の道, *shoji no michi*),³⁴³ a Buddhist term with a similar meaning to the *rokudō*.³⁴⁴ The following line, "the gods not accepting her" (*kami wa ukezu ya*), is an allusion to the anonymous poem from *Kokinwakashū* (501):

<i>koseji to</i>	I performed ablutions
<i>ote awakawa ni</i>	in the Arakawa river
<i>seshi misogi</i>	to purify myself from longing;
<i>kami wa ukezu zo,</i>	but it appears the gods
<i>nari ni kerashi mo</i>	will not accept my offering. ³⁴⁵

Miko, ritual specialists in the *kami* worship tradition, would perform purification rituals in rivers and streams (*misogi*, discussed in chapter 2) to spiritually cleanse people, animals, and objects of *kegare*. The Kamo River in Heian-kyō was a main site for these rituals. The same poem is featured in Dan 65 of the Heian period *Ise monogatari*, describing an episode where Ariwara no Narihira (825-880) performs purification rituals to rid himself of his love for

³⁴² Based on theories found in late Kamakura-early Muromachi period treatise *Toyoashihara shinpū waki* (豊葦原神風和記) by Jihen (慈遍, dates uncertain). Headnote #19, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 75. Jihen was a Tendai monk trained at the Enrakuji complex with connections to the Imperial court in Kyōto. He took special interest in the *kami* worship elements of the medieval *honji suijaku* paradigm, authoring several treatises on the subject, with *Toyoashihara shinpū waki* being a summarization and explanation of traditions of the Ise Grand Shrine complex and associated institutions. Take, *Tendai Shoseki sōgō mokuroku*, Online edition, Yoshikawa kobunkan Inc.

³⁴³ Also from *Toyoashihara shinpū waki*. Headnote #19, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 75.

³⁴⁴ Headnote #19, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 75.

³⁴⁵ Headnote #20 and Headnote #12, Itō, *Yōkyokushū* (*ge*), 75 and 351. Translation my own.

Nijō no kisaki, the Empress.³⁴⁶ This poetic allusion may be interpreted in two distinct ways. The first is that Rokujō's spirit can be identified in a similar love-sick predicament as the anonymous speaker from the *Kokinwakashū*, and despite her (and the Buddhist monk's) best ritual attempt to purify her spirit of karmic attachment to Hikaru Genji, it has not been accepted by the *kami* due to the depth of her attachment. The second possibility is that her spirit, having become infected with *kegare* due to drifting out from the protective *torii* of the Shrine of the Fields, is condemned to a contaminated soteriological status. This second reading is only possible if the Shrine of the Fields is accepted as a concrete sacred space and location with connections to the Inner and Outer Shrines of Ise, and *not* an ontological manifestation of Rokujō's spiritual being. Given the anachronistic nature of the shrine and the depth of Rokujō's karmic attachment as demonstrated in the above textual examples, I feel that the first reading of this poem is more likely. The final rhetorical question ending the play is a direct poetic reference to "The Burning House" parable from the *Lotus Sutra*, symbolizing Rokujō's ambiguous soteriological status and the uncertainty of her achieving *jōbutsu*. The spirit of Rokujō in *Nonomiya* desires release from her karmic constraints and suffering on the *rokudō*, however her preoccupation with her karmic attachment may preclude her from release via enlightenment.

Conclusion: The Ambivalence of Feminine Soteriology in *Nonomiya*

As discussed above, Konparu Zenchiku's *Nonomiya* is a rhetorically complex play that utilizes poetic imagery from the *honzetsu* of *Genji monogatari* (specifically the "Sakaki" and "Aoi" chapters) and "The Burning House" parable of the *Lotus Sutra* to paint the portrait of a female-spirit as an individual caught between emotional memories of the human world and eternal concerns within the spirit realm. In its depiction of female soteriology, the play

³⁴⁶ Itō, *Yōkyokushū (ge)*, 351.

occupies a middle ground between the tortured stasis of *Yōkihi* and the Buddhological idealism of *Tamakazura*. Regarding sacred space and geographic location, one of the principle characters of the drama is the Shrine of the Fields itself: its ornate poetic descriptions mirror the psychological state of the Rokujō spirit and it is highly plausible that the anachronistic building and grounds are indeed a manifestation of her spirit's ontology, manifesting every year on the Saga Fields at the same time as her ghostly figure. In the same way, the shrine represents her karmic attachment to her memories of the past, and it is these memories that apparently prevent her from transmigrating. Ritual action by the *waki* seems to have little effect, as she remains at the close of the drama in a highly ambiguous soteriological state. Perhaps Rokujō's spirit in *Nonomiya* best describes the problem of female soteriology within the medieval *honji suijaku* paradigm as expressed by Zenchiku's female-spirit plays: highly variable, ambiguous, and ambivalent.

Conclusion

Reconsidering Problematic Female Soteriology in Zenchiku's Female-spirit Noh Plays

Throughout this study, I have explored the dynamic of *nyonin jōbutsu* as delimited by the *honji suijaku* paradigm within the female-spirit plays of Konparu Zenchiku in multiple ways. My purpose of engaging this religious problematic through the medium of theatrical performance, especially the continuous tradition of Noh theater, is that it provides detailed insight into the combinatory religious traditions of the Muromachi period through Zenchiku's religious worldview, which reflected his distinct historical moment. I have analyzed Zenchiku's works by employing a three-pronged interdisciplinary methodology, with the goal of placing each play in its original literary, socio-historical, and religious context. This methodology involved delineating the multiple *honzetsu* (source texts) utilized for each play's composition, with focus on the importance of sacred space and geographic location; explicating the role of *honkadori* (poetic allusion) in creating a dense weave of associative imagery to construct multilayered meanings within the text; and examining the centrality of religious language used in the text, with focus on allegoresis. This was done to develop and analyze the soteriological status of each work's *shite*: her ontological and soteriological potentiality for Buddhist enlightenment. I have limited my study to the female-spirit-specific plays *Yōkihi*, *Tamakazura*, and *Nonomiya*, as the *shite* of each play is of female-human origin, rather than a plant-spirit or of a hybrid spiritual entity manifesting in female form. This choice simplifies the ontological and soteriological demarcation, analysis, and scope of the current study. In future research, I hope to comparatively examine how other *shite* in dream-vision Noh, such as the spirits of warriors or non-sentient plants, achieve enlightenment in Noh plays.

As demonstrated in this study, the origins of *nyonin jōbutsu* in Japanese literature were frequently traced to the *Lotus Sutra*, with its associated ambivalent and paradoxical conditions for enlightenment that came to be directly associated with birth as a woman or the female body itself, especially in the form of the *goshō* (Five Obstructions) from the Parable of the Dragon Princess from the “Devadatta” chapter. Within the *honji suijaku* worldview, where *kami* worship and Buddhism formed a combinatory religious practice, multiple other contingent factors played a major role in shaping conceptions of enlightenment and how gendered perception of *nyonin jōbutsu* fit within this system. *Kegare* (ritual defilement) from *kami* worship and the *rokudō* (rebirth along six-realms of rebirth) from Buddhism were primary components of the *honji suijaku* paradigm that directly affected the spiritual life and soteriological potentiality of women in medieval Japan, who were perceived within this system as inherently afflicted by gender-specific sins such as karmic attachment and lust. Methods of escape from these innate sins included the Tendai-based doctrine of *hongaku shisō*, original enlightenment thought (the concept that all of reality was enlightened in its origin), a non-dualistic belief-system embedded throughout the *honji suijaku* medieval worldview. Ritual was also a critical component of spiritual and soteriological aid for medieval women. This was provided via the assistance of the shamanic ascetic, who underwent a spiritual journey to commune with the other realm. Within the dramaturgy of Noh theater, the role of the ascetic is fulfilled by the *waki* (side-actor), who undertakes a dream-vision or sometimes even mantic journey to contact the spirit of the *shite*, and performs religious rituals (frequently *kuyō*, funerary services) for the spirit to achieve enlightenment.

The potential for female enlightenment in the medieval period was also affected by the socio-historic condition of women, which was typified by a gradual decline in personal agency as well as spiritual restriction. From the Heian period into the Kamakura, and then

into the Muromachi, woman gradually lost their rights to own and administer individual property and head independent households. These legal and economic developments were initially enacted by the Kamakura shogunate to consolidate power under patrilineal warrior households. By the late Kamakura and early Muromachi, marriage became a restricting institution for woman of all social classes in Japan, as they were forced to live with their husband's families, with their primary familial role being the production of a bloodline heir. This paradigmatic shift of female-spiritual and social agency can best be seen in the figure of Ono no Komachi within medieval literature. Komachi's lack of an historical biography made her open to exploitation by proselytizing Buddhological morality tales focusing on impermanence and female-gendered karmic sins such as pride, vanity, and lust. The medieval Komachi figure subsequently served as a prototype for the innate karmic suffering and soteriological conflict of female-spirit personas of the Noh, including the *shite* figures in Zenchiku's female-spirit plays.

Just as the socio-political situation for medieval Japanese women informed the religious environment of the era, so too did the political conditions of Zenchiku's lifetime affect his writings. Zenchiku's main source of patronage for himself and the Konparu troupe that he led was the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex. During his lifetime, there was a major armed political conflict at this religious institution, the Daijōin political dispute. The source of conflict was set off when the former *monzeki* of the cloistered Daijōin temple, the influential and powerful Kyōkaku, was deposed from his position by shogun Yoshinori and replaced by the younger Jinson. Upon Yoshinori's latter (unrelated) assassination, Kyōkaku sided with the Kōfukuji-Kasuga-related Furuichi warrior clan to retake his former high-ranking position at the Daijōin, leading to direct armed confrontation with the Tsutsui warrior clan, who were also associated with the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex and supported Jinson. While Kyōkaku was ultimately reinstated as the *monzeki* of the powerful Ichijōin cloistered temple at the

Kōfukuji-Kasuga through his alliance with regional shogunal governor Hatakeyama, private fighting between the Furuichi and Tsutsui in and around Nara City, as well as documented conflicts within Kōfukuji grounds, was a major cause of disorder at the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex. Moreover, this armed conflict had direct results for Zenchiku's patronage situation at the religious institution. Prior scholars have focused on the playwright/actor's patronage relationship with Jinson as a potential audience for abstract treatises such as *Rokurin ichirō* and *Meishukushū*. The full extent of Zenchiku's interactions with Kyōkaku may be difficult to judge within the scope of this current project, and has been left for future research, but in chapter 3 of this dissertation I attempted to sketch out a few reasons, such as Jinson's young age and weak political position, he was unlikely to have been the only patron Zenchiku considered to help him secure a foothold at Kōfukuji-Kasuga and ensure the overall personal and economic safety of himself, his family, and Noh troupe. By tracking the timeline of Zenchiku's interactions with Kyōkaku based on primary textual sources, I have demonstrated that Zenchiku was likely to have been aware that power now lay with the newly re-appointed *monzeki* of the Ichijōin. For example, the year that he re-established relations with Kyōkaku (1450), he also received the appointment of Kasuga Grand Shine *gakutō* (ritual specialist). This position, undoubtedly secured via support from Kyōkaku, was essential in establishing the favorable relationship Zenchiku and the Konparu troupe later enjoyed under Jinson.

In terms of the potential influence the Daijōin political conflict may have exerted on Zenchiku's religious worldview, it is critical to bear in mind that battles between the Furuichi and Tsutsui occurred with the sacred space of the Kōfukuji and other consecrated sites of the Kōfukuji-Kasuga complex. As the mythos of Kōfukuji-Kasuga was central to Zenchiku's conception of the Konparu and their role as specialists of the *shikisanban* ritual, this may have potentially constituted a violation of sacred space from his viewpoint. As elaborated in chapter 2, blood and death were the most severe forms of *kegare* in the *kami* worship

components of the *honji suijaku* paradigm in the medieval period. These experiences may have potentially impacted Zenchiku's viewpoint concerning the ontological stability of sacred space and its soteriological potential, both major elements expressed within the dramaturgy of his female-spirit plays. Finally, Zenchiku may have expressed this and other anxieties of the politically unstable and violent Muromachi period via soteriological allegorical through female-spirit plays, as they would be considered non-political works (versus celebratory god plays or warrior plays honoring the dead), providing him with a high level of artistic freedom.

As a canvas on which to express his art, Zenchiku drew from a wide variety of sources when dealing with female-spirits. One critical influence was that of his father-in-law Zeami's conception of the feminine style as delineated in *Sandō*. Another was the centrality of Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji monogatari* as *honzetsu* for Noh play composition. Considered the exemplar of *yūgen* by the medieval Japanese literary world, the *Genji* serves as either the primary or secondary source text for all three of Zenchiku's female-spirit plays considered here: *Yōkihi*, *Tamakazura*, and *Nonomiya*. While the *Genji* acts as a frequent source for Noh dramas and female-spirit plays, these three plays highlight soteriological conflict as central to the dramaturgy of Zenchiku's plays. Primary themes of the *Genji* are Buddhist impermanence, loss, the *rokudō*, and attempting to overcome innate karmic sins. These religious and soteriologically-focused thematics are amplified within the dramaturgy of the Noh drama as expressed through the spirit of the *Genji* heroine in the form of the *shite*. The three plays also demonstrate three types of *nyonin jōbutsu*: stasis, realization, and ambiguity. These soteriological statuses are discovered through utilization of the three-pronged interdisciplinary methodology of textual analysis described above.

The play *Yōkihi* represents stasis: focusing on the intense soteriological suffering experienced by the *shite*, Yang Guifei. The ontological status of the *shite* for this play is

somewhat problematic and this is due to the complex layers of *honzetsu* that comprise the work. While the primary source for *Yōkihi* is Bai Juyi's Tang Dynasty period poem *Chang hen ge*, as discussed in chapter 4 Zenchiku most likely did not read this work, instead working from Japanese *kanbun* texts such as *Chōgonka jō*, *Chōgonka-den*, and the “Kiritsubō” chapter of *Genji monogatari*. It is from these native Japanese sources that the Yang spirit of *Yōkihi* derives her unique ontological and soteriological status as a heavenly being, which is not found in the Chinese original. This mediated reception of *Genji monogatari* is typical for Noh, and crucial to the construction of the languishing imagery of Zenchiku's play, which focuses on decay and the inevitability of death for all sentient beings. This is combined with the hybrid Penglai (Chinese)/Tokoyo (Japanese) setting, where it seems long-life may be achieved but Buddhist enlightenment can never be actualized. Finally, the role of Daoist wizard as *waki* acts simply as messenger to the spirit of Yang; he offers no spiritual or ritual assistance. The dramatic irony of *Yōkihi* lies in the psychological awareness of Yang's spirit: she appears hyper aware of the ever-turning Dharma and her potential decay and death within this supposedly heaven-like realm, yet she is unable to act upon that realization and actualize enlightenment. The overall tone of *Yōkihi* is thus highly tragic.

This is contrasted by *Tamakazura*, which represents realization of *nyonin jōbutsu* within Zenchiku's dramaturgy. This realization is dictated by two critical factors: Zenchiku's esoteric allegoresis of Tamakazura's name based on her original *honzetsu* in the *Genji*; and the miraculous power of the sacred space and location of the Hatsusedera complex and its Eleven-Headed Kannon image in providing positive karmic influence. In the “Tamakazura” chapter of the *Genji*, the character of Tamakazura takes a pilgrimage to Hatsusedera to receive guidance from its Eleven-Headed Kannon image as to her fate. Zenchiku builds the drama of his play around this episode, treating Tamakazura's spirit in the first act of the play as a devoted pilgrim to Hatsusedera seeking enlightenment. Zenchiku utilizes allegoresis

regarding Tamakazura's name: "Jewel of the Law" (*tama*) transcends the entangling "vine" (*kazura*) of her karmic attachments to find enlightenment. This esoteric allegoresis performed by the Tamakazura spirit regarding her name enables the first stage of her enlightenment. The second and final stage is performed by the traveling Buddhist monk, played by the *waki*, who performs a *kuyō* service for her utilizing ritual language from the *Lotus Sutra*. This ritual assistance from the Buddhist monk is the final step needed for Tamakazura's spirit to achieve enlightenment and be completely free of delusion.

The final play under analysis, *Nonomiya*, falls somewhere within the spectrum of enlightenment between *Yōkihi* and *Tamakazura*, ultimately leaving the *shite* of Lady Rokujō in a soteriologically ambiguous state. Also deriving its *honzetsu* from *Genji monogatari* (specifically the "Sakaki" and "Aoi" chapters), *Nonomiya* additionally employs allusions to "The Burning House" parable of the *Lotus Sutra* in its drama of a spirit trapped between worlds. Space and geographic location is also of critical importance in this work, with the Shrine of the Fields (Nonomiya) of Saga being the site of dramatic action. The shrine setting functions in two ways: the poetic descriptions of the autumn season and the shrine itself illustrate the emotional and psychological state of Rokujō's spirit; it is also plausible that the anachronistic building and grounds are manifestations of her spirit's ontology, manifesting annually on the Saga fields along with her ghost. The shrine represents her karmic attachment to memories, preventing her from transmigrating. Ritual action by the *waki*, again a traveling Buddhist monk, does not aid spur her toward enlightenment; at the play's end, her continued ambiguous soteriological state is represented performatively by the *shite* stepping back and forth across the *torii* threshold of the shrine.

In all three of Zenchiku's works, sacred space and geographic location as delineated through each *honzetsu* played a crucial role in determining the ontological and soteriological status of the female-spirit. This reaffirms the importance of sacred space within the medieval

honji suijaku paradigm and how it plays a direct role in affecting the spiritual status of those who occupy it. While the dynamic nature of sacred space is not often addressed in studies on Japanese drama, this study has demonstrated that it was an indispensable element of Zenchiku's dramaturgy, especially when considering the gendered problematic of *nyonin jōbutsu*. Additionally, in each case analyzed in this study, it appears that the female-spirit required ritual assistance from a male ascetic. Further research in non-Zenchiku female-spirit plays, such as the works of Zeami and other Muromachi-period playwrights, will be necessary to understand if sacred space and ritual assistance by the *waki*, are more broadly critical components for *nyonin jōbutsu* throughout the world of Noh theater.

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