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TAINTED GENDER:
SEXUAL IMPURITY AND WOMEN IN *KANKYO NO TOMO*

A Master's Thesis Presented

by

YUKO MIZUE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Asian Languages and Literatures

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SEXUAL IMPURITY AND WOMEN IN *KANKYO NO TOMO*

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I encountered many difficulties in academic and ordinary life, but my friends were always there for me. If it had not for them, I could not have spent whole two years happily. I am proud of having been together with them and hope to keep supporting them wherever they are.

Lastly, my family did not say much to me but always supported me no matter how far away they are. All I can say to them is *arigato*.

ABSTRACT

TAINTED GENDER:
SEXUAL IMPURITY AND WOMEN IN *KANKYO NO TOMO*

SEPTEMBER 2009

YUKO MIZUE, B.A., KANSAI GAIDAI UNIVERSITY

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

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This thesis consists of research on women and Buddhism in light of a medieval Japanese Buddhist tales collection called *Kankyo no Tomo.* This collection reveals the predicament in which women in medieval Japan found themselves. As the focus of sexual desire (towards them and by them), they were also inherently polluted due to their connection with blood (*kegare*).

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis combines research on women and Buddhism focusing on a single collection of Buddhist tales, *Kankyo no Tomo*, written in early medieval Japan. The main purpose of this study is to reveal how Japanese Buddhism created a peculiar predicament for women depicting them as being trapped in their work in spite of their active lives in the real world.

What led me to this research was a single question that came upon me several years ago: "If I become a nun, can I attain peace?" I am not sure why I thought about such a thing. As an "ordinary" modern Japanese Buddhist, I have been exposed to Buddhist ceremonies as family events, but nothing beyond this. While haunted by this question, I thought of one person: Setouchi Jakuchō (1922-).[1] Setouchi is perhaps the most active and famous nun in Japan today and is also one of the most famous women writers in Japanese literary history.[2] She renounced the world in 1973 and then started to write about Buddhism. Works such as *Shaka* (The Buddha) elicited in me even more interest in Buddhism. However, what I found most interesting was Setouchi Jakuchō herself. As a writer, she is most recently famous for her translation of *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji) into modern Japanese. She has also written biographical studies of modern women writers such as Tamura Toshiko (1884-1945) and Okamoto Kanoko

[1] Setouchi Harumi (Jakuchō is her Buddhist name) was born in Tokushima, the second daughter of a family whose business was making and selling Shintō and Buddhist altars and fittings.

[2] She became interested in literature as a child, and entered Tokyo Women's University in 1940, majoring in Japanese literature. She started her career as a writer of fairy tales for girl's magazines in 1950.

(1889-1939).[3] As a woman, she lived quite passionately and expressed her experiences through the perspective of feminine subjectivity in her literary works.[4] A notable characteristic of her works is the use of sexual expressions.[5] She depicts sexual scenes vividly, both in her literature and in works dealing with Buddhism.

Even though Setouchi Jakuchō is both a nun and a writer, it made me uncomfortable that her Buddhist works contain sexual scenes and that a nun wrote them. I started research on the history of Japanese Buddhism and soon encountered a sutra called *Ketsubonkyō* (Blood Pond Sutra). This sutra teaches that women must fall into a hell called the "blood pond" because of their menstruation. This negative teaching surprised me and, at the same time, it let me consider Buddhism more critically. In my research I outlined the discrimination against women in Buddhism from its beginnings. One problem in Buddhism which greatly concerned me was the sexual desires of men (i.e., monks). The theory that sexual desires were obstructions to a religious goal and attaining enlightenment seemed to me to be a form of discrimination against women.

Seen within the context of Japanese history, however, the situation becomes more complicated because of the societal changes that developed through the

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[3] Her work *Tamura Toshiko* was awarded the first Tamura Toshiko Award in 1961.

[4] While in college, she had an arranged marriage with a man studying Chinese music history in Beijing as a Ministry of Foreign Affair's scholar. She moved to Beijing to join her husband after her graduation in 1943, and she gave birth to a daughter in 1944. There she experienced Japan's defeat, and her family went back to Tokushima in 1946. While her husband was in Tokyo to find a job to provide for his family, she fell in love with his former student. She decided to live with the young man and left both her husband and daughter. She never married again and renounced the world in 1973. *Natsu no owari* (The End of Summer) was awarded the Women's Literature Award in 1963. This novel is based on the author's eight-year relationship with Oda Jinjirō (1910-1979), a married man. Their relationship started as colleagues of Bungakusha (a literature group organized by Niwa Fumio), which she joined in 1956.

[5] The novel *Kashin* (1957) was criticized for using too many words for *shikyū* (the womb), and Setouchi Harumi was labeled as a "*shikyū sakka*" (lit. womb writer). Due to this, she could not make her works public for five years.

assimilation of Japan's own culture and religions with continental ones. Although these changes enriched Japanese culture in many ways, they also increased the inferiority of women both in the society and in religion. One of the most significant imports was the belief in impurity (*kegare*) that was added to the existing Japanese concept of *kegare*. Buddhism, which came to Japan from the continent, already contained a belief in impurity, but Japanese society possessed its own view of impurity. The belief in *kegare* had important roles in many aspects and new research into Japanese history has shown that it also affected the transition from a courtly culture in the Heian period (794-1184) to a warrior culture in the Kamakura period (1185-1333).[6]

As a part of cultural development, the literature that flourished in the Heian period at court became diversified in the medieval period. Buddhism was incorporated into literature, helping to spread Buddhist doctrine. One of the most important creations in Japan's literary development was the *setsuwa* (Buddhist tales) genre. *Setsuwa* is comprised of various tales which show how Buddhists tried to teach others and how Buddhism was received by ordinary people. Among setsuwa collections, *Kankyo no Tomo* (1222) has two particular characteristics – it focuses partly on women and on the meditation of the impurity of the dead body (*fujōkan*). The main purpose of *fujōkan* was to help monks to detach themselves from sexual desires and the dead body which embodied impurity as a woman's body. This practice clearly expresses that women, impurity, and sexual desires were connected in the mind of men. The goal of this thesis is to untie this tangled connection.

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[6] Izawa Motohiko points out the influence of Japanese belief of impurity in the rise of warriors. See Izawa Motohiko, *Ten to ten ga sen ni naru: nihonshi shuchū kōgi*, Tokyo: Shōdensha, 2007, 77-106.

The first chapter of my thesis is an exploration of Buddhism and women in India. Its focus is how the Buddha treated women and how such treatment led to a misogynistic system in Buddhism. In addition, the concept of women's inferiority will be examined. The second chapter covers the history of Buddhism and women in Japan from its beginnings to the medieval period. It is necessary to look at Japanese history itself in order to contextualize Buddhism within Japan, but this chapter will focus on societal and religious changes concerning women. In the third chapter, I will discuss the problem of sexual desires in Japanese Buddhism and the belief in *kegare* in terms of selected stories in *Kankyo no Tomo*.

CHAPTER 1

THE EARLY HISTORY OF WOMEN AND BUDDHISM

Women in Buddhism were considered inferior, a view that has existed since Buddhism's inception in India. Buddhism developed through interactions with the societies to which its institutions belonged and the doctrinal changes reflected the social situations of each period in each region. Recently there has been much research pertaining to Buddhism and women, much of it by feminist scholars. The historical documents, on which much of that research is based, are vital, but they cannot tell us every event of the past precisely. In addition, it is imperative to consider the fact that the preserved records might have been chosen under the influence of the particular beliefs or social situations in each respective time period, or that research was biased. Rita M. Gross explains, "[W]hat is selected and what is omitted, the reasons for including and excluding certain data, always coincide with certain uses of the past."[7] The records are easily misread if one uses them with a preconceived opinion about their research topic since many people look for documents that can prove their suppositions. Gross adds, "[I]t is much more difficult to stay with the subtlety of a mixed record and to refrain from praising or blaming the past, both of which result from a projection of feminist agendas onto the past."[8]

The information and ideas we find in scholarly works never tell the whole truth

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[7] Rita M. Gross, *Buddhism After Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism* (India: Sri Satguru Publications, 1993), 20.

[8] Ibid., 21.

about the past and sometimes blur the facts found in the historical documents. However, it is important to keep a potentially accusatory stance away from historical documents in order to understand them more objectively. Taking this important point into consideration, in this chapter I will examine the history of women's inferiority in Buddhism by exploring how the Buddha was concerned with women and how sexual differences between men and women influenced the latter's position in Buddhism after the Buddha's death. The Buddha's attitude toward women led to some of the main concepts of the inferiority of women's sexuality created through the development and transmission of Buddhism from India to East Asia.

The Buddha and Women

The word Buddhism in English is derived from Buddha, which means the one who is enlightened. The Buddha is not just one person; everyone has the potential to become a Buddha and the goal for Buddhists is to attain this status. Buddhism's founder is Siddhartha Gotama. He has been called the historical Buddha and has come to represent the Buddha in this world. Often referred to as Shakyamuni (i.e. "sage of the Shakyas") because he was born as a prince of the Shakya tribe in India around 566 B.C.E., the son of the king of Shakya, Śuddhodana, and the empress, Māyā. There are many miraculous stories about the Buddha, which were recorded and most likely created after his death. His birth, for example, is said to have been an extraordinary one. These stories of the Buddha's birth were created in an effort to express that the Buddha was the greatest and most sacred Buddha in order to ensure the Buddhist teachings, but what we can see in the birth of the Buddha besides his sacredness is how women's role as

childbearers was dealt with in Buddhism. Thus the birth of the historical Buddha is the first contact between women and the Buddha.

There are different stories about the birth of the Buddha, but all of them start with his conception and a white elephant. There are numerous pictorial renderings that depict the scene. One night Māya and Śuddhodana had the same dream in which a white baby elephant entered Māya from the right side of her body and they heard a voice which told them that she had become pregnant. Śuddhodana loved Māya deeply, but there had not been a child between them. Women's most important role was to give birth to sons in India since the society was patriarchal and male children were valued more than female children in order to protect and maintain the family lineage. In Māya's case, it must have been a big concern that there had not been an heir to the throne, so her conception was celebrated. When the time for delivery neared, Māya left the palace for the home of her relatives to give birth, as was the custom in India, and she bore Siddhartha en route. Śuddhodana loved her so deeply that he did not let her leave until just before the delivery, so the long journey on the back of an elephant, which was the normal mode of transportation in India at that time, must have caused her to go into labor. What makes this scene extraordinary is that the Buddha emerged from the right side of her body (exactly where the white elephant entered her in the dream) while she was resting by a Sal tree at Lumbinī. It is reported that extraordinary things happened in the world and around the infant as if the earth too celebrated the birth. It is also said

that Siddhartha immediately took seven steps after his birth and said that "this would be the last time he would be reborn."[9]

This episode expresses the sacredness of the Buddha, but at the same time, it blurs the biological ability of women to give birth. A delivery in which a baby comes out from the right side of a mother's body is, of course, impossible, but there is an ancient Indian tradition that saints and heroes are born from heads, sides, or legs and that the Buddha's birth has its base in these regional legends.[10] Although there is no obvious negative connotation or discrimination against women in the stories about the birth of the Buddha, the female body is expressed simply as a medium for the birth of a sacred being. This view was common in patriarchal Hinduism, from which Buddhism sprang. According to Swanna Satha-Anand, one of the goals of patriarchal Hinduism is for a man to obtain immortality by being reborn as one's own son; women can go to a promised land with their husbands.[11] Intercourse between husband and wife can be considered the most important ritual in this scheme as both of them act as religious agents. However, the child has to be male and the wife cannot attain the goal by herself. Even though women have an important role as the ones who give birth and the Hindu belief does not deny that women can attain this goal, women are subordinate to men in this world and when they go to a promised land.

Māya died seven days after her delivery and Siddhartha was raised by his

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[9] Ibid., 18.

[10] Setouchi Jakuchō, *Shaka to onna to kono yo no ku* (Tokyo: Nippon hōsō shuppankai, 2002), 20. All translations are mine.

[11] Suwanna Satha-Anand, "Buddhism on Sexuality and Enlightenment." In *Good Sex: Feminist Perspectives from the World Religions*, ed. Jung, Patricia Beattie (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 20.

mother's sister, Mahāprajāpatī. She was just a wet nurse at first, but soon became Śuddhodana's second wife. Siddhartha was well educated and he was skilled at martial arts, so everyone, especially his father, hoped that he would become a great king. However, Śuddhodana feared that his son might leave the palace to seek the religious way. By custom, Śuddhodana invited a fortuneteller to the palace right after his son was born and the fortuneteller said that the prince would either become a great king and conquer the world, or he would become a saint who saved all the people in this world from suffering.[12] Śuddhodana gave his son everything he could think of to please Siddhartha in order to keep him away from the religious world and even tried to prevent him from seeing anything outside of the palace. However, nowhere does it state that Siddhartha enjoyed his life as a prince. Even so, he had at least three wives and had his first child, Rāhula, with his third wife, Yaśodarā, when he was twenty-nine years old. Apparently he tried to live as a king, husband, and father, but one day, it is said, he suddenly left the palace and renounced the world leaving his family on the night of the birth of his son.

It is thought that the reason for his renunciation was that he encountered the four signs – old age, sickness, death, and mendicancy. The impact of the four signs on him must have been tremendous if it is true that he had spent his entire life without knowing such things. However, the fact that he renounced the world shortly after he became a father cannot be dismissed. Furthermore, it is also possible to consider that the death of his mother shortly after his birth greatly influenced the Buddha's decision. He was said to have been an impressionable child. No matter how much he was

[12] Setouchi, *Shaka to onna to kono yo no ku*, 21.

depicted as an extraordinary one, he was born as the child of a human being and the death of his mother must have induced some self-reflection on life. It is reasonable to think that the death of his mother and the birth of his son affected him considerably.

Having renounced the world, he practiced meditation diligently following the masters, but finally he is said to have found the true path through meditation all by himself. On attaining enlightenment, the Buddha started to teach people and through this teaching a Buddhist community (sangha) was formed. As the Buddhist community became more popular, a large number of people, both men and women, gathered around him to listen to his sermons. If the Buddha's teachings did not apply to women, they would not have tried to leave lay life and enter the Buddhist path. The reaction of women toward his teaching was due to the fact that the Buddha did not exclude women from his ideas, and he seemed to be rather tolerant of women's acting outside the gender role imposed by Indian patriarchal society.

One of the principal concerns of Buddhism is that all living creatures are in a circular process of birth, death, reincarnation. The goal for a Buddhist is to transcend this cycle of rebirth. One of the most important teachings of Buddhism is that "the dharma (the Buddhist Law) is neither male nor female"[13] meaning that there is no difference between men and women when they understand the Buddhist teachings. In order to achieve enlightenment, people must detach themselves from every kind of desire in this world. Most importantly, the Buddha encouraged the life of renunciation as the most direct way to achieve enlightenment.[14] There are five important restrictions

[13] Gross, *Buddhism after Patriarchy*, 24.
[14] Satha-Anand, "Buddhism on Sexuality and Enlightenment," 117.

for monastic Buddhists: against killing, stealing, lying, consuming intoxicants, and having sexual intercourse. Among the five restrictions the Buddha considered sexual intercourse as the most severe sin, and monks who committed this sin were permanently dismissed from the community.

In India, sex was not considered negatively, and this is proven by the fact that many statues representing Eros were constructed before Buddhism began and that the *Kāma Sutra* speaks positively about sex. The sutra teaches how to have sex and explains techniques in detail. It was written from the point view of men, but the point of the teaching is that men lead women to sexual fulfillment.[15] The positive attitude toward sex also can be seen in the way of life. The ideal life for a man was divided into four periods: studying by following teachers, marrying and producing children, dedicating oneself to religious practices in forests (and handing over patrimony to one's son), and wandering around the country discarding attachments. Throughout these four periods, a man accomplishes three aims--*dharma* (religious duties), *aruta* (making profit), and *kāma* (having sexual pleasure). In this way they can obtain a peaceful mind.[16]

The denial of sex in Buddhist monastic life was one of the main characteristics of its teachings and quite radical. There is one notable story about sexual desire and enlightenment in Buddhism. It is reported that the Buddha was tempted by the three seductive daughters of Mara, the Evil One, on the night just before the Buddha attained

[15] Minamoto Junko, *Bukkyō to sei: erosu eno ifu to sabetsu*, Tokyo: San'ichi shobō, 1996, 15.
[16] Setouchi, *Shaka to onna to konoyo no ku*, 38-39.

enlightenment. It is remarkable that the last test to attain nirvana was overcoming sexual enticements. This implies that sexual desire is the strongest of all human desires.

The Buddhist teachings were quite innovative in Indian society because the prevailing caste system did not pertain to the Buddhist teachings. In those days, people could not choose jobs or marry outside their caste and, moreover, women were subordinated to men in a patriarchal society. The Buddha's teachings spread widely throughout society despite both the caste system and the gender hierarchy in early India. Nevertheless, the Buddha did not allow women to renounce the world for the first five years after the establishment of his Buddhist sangha, most likely because the denial of sex had significant meaning within Buddhism. The five restrictions mentioned above apply to every human being, but the restriction of sex has a different meaning for men and women in an androcentric society. The Buddha must have been apprehensive about the monks' instincts as men. If he allowed women to join his Buddhist sangha, women would be a hindrance to men's practice because monks would inevitably interact with women. One often quoted conversation between the Buddha and his disciple Ananda shows the Buddha's way of thinking about women:

> "How are we to conduct ourselves, lord, with regard to womankind?"
> "As not seeing them, Ananda."
> "But if we should see them, what are we to do?"
> "Not talking, Ananda."
> "But if they should speak to us, lord, what are we to do?"
> "Keep wide awake, Ananda."[17]

The Buddha suggested avoiding contact with women or ever having concern about them.

The Buddha's consideration for his followers is admirable in that he tried to help monks practice to attain their goal, but it is necessary to point out that he did not aid women in order to protect his community. Why did he not do for women what he did for men if his teachings were supposed to save women as well as men? Furthermore, the Buddha said nothing about women's desire and his neglect can be seen as a kind of indifference toward women who also needed his guidance.

Five years after the Buddha's enlightenment, he admitted women to the sangha and allowed them to receive ordination. The first woman who renounced the world was the Buddha's aunt and stepmother, Mahāpajāpatī. She left the palace with her followers after the death of Śuddhodana to seek the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha rejected her three times and finally Ananda asked the Buddha to let her renounce the world out of the pity. The Buddha finally permitted the renunciation of women reluctantly, saying:

> If, Ananda, woman had not obtained the going forth from home into homelessness in the *dhamma* and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder, the Brahma-faring, Ananda, would have endured for a thousand years. But since, Ananda, women have gone forth… in the *dhamma* and the discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder, now Ananda, the Brahma-faring will endure only five hundred years.[18]

He predicted that the Buddhist teachings would be shortened because of the inclusion of women. What this statement means is that women will be an obstruction to the Buddhist Law and not just to monks in the Buddhist community.

Even though it is clear that the Buddha did not declare women to be evil and ultimately let them join his sangha, there was a clear distinction between monks and

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[17] *Dighanikaya,* xvi.5.9, Quoted in Church, Cornelia Dimmitt, "Temptress, Housewife, Nun: Women's Role in Early Buddhism," *Anima: An Experiental Journal,* 1:2 (Spring 1975), 55, as quoted in Gross, *Buddhism after Patriarchy*, 44.

[18] Gross, *Buddhism after Patriarchy*, 32.

nuns. The Buddha even went so far as to create the eight special rules for nuns at the first ordination ceremony for women:

> 1. A nun, even if a hundred years have passed since she received the precepts, shall greet a monk ordained that very day with deference, rise up from her seat, salute him with joined hands, and show him respect.
> 2. A nun may not spend the rainy season retreat in a district where there are no monks.
> 3. A nun should ask two things of the monks every fortnight: when the Uposatha, or the bimonthly confession will be held and when the nuns should call upon the monks for instructions in the eight rules or reverence.
> 4. A nun should make the triple invitation before two groups within the Sangha, the male and the female, after the rainy season retreat: she must ask if anyone has seen, heard, or suspected anything against her.
> 5. A nun who has committed a serious offense shall undergo the *mānatta* discipline before both groups.
> 6. A nun can receive the complete precepts before both groups only when the *sikkāmānā*, or "postulant," has followed the six precepts for two years.
> 7. A nun on no account may revile or abuse a monk.
> 8. A nun may not admonish a monk from this day forward [the day of the founding of the nuns' order], but a monk may admonish a nun.[19]

It is obvious that these rules were not just to keep nuns away from monks, but were meant to discriminate against the nuns. Even though there was no gender barrier on attaining enlightenment, the sangha reproduced the patriarchal society outside of it and differentiated women from men. It may be possible that the Buddha's only intention was to curb monks' sexual desires by showing how women were inferior to men, but this idea is just like the ideas outside the sangha and there are no documents proving that the Buddha believed in women's inferioity. Suwanna Satha-Anand points out that

the Buddhist community needed to get respect from lay society since the sangha did not provide for itself and looked for material support from lay society.[20] The Buddha's teachings tried to ignore the caste system and gender hierarchy in India, but it is crucial that the Buddha could not entirely cut the ties between his sangha and the outside world.

The Buddha made a distinction between his sangha and the lay world, but his incomprehensible attitude toward women was influenced by Indian patriarchal society and so his sangha remained an androcentric one. The most important factor in that scheme is sexual desire as a hindrance for attaining enlightenment. Women became the target of subordination because of their potential to produce sexual desire.

The Concept of the Inferiority of Women

Although the Buddha took a negative stance toward women in some aspects as examined above, he did not create doctrinal teachings that excluded women completely. Nevertheless, the concept of the inferiority of women was created in Buddhism and widely spread as part of the Buddhist teachings after his death. The rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism and the transmission of the Buddhist teachings to different cultures created a difference between monks and nuns and created radically offensive teachings about women's inferiority. Mahāyāna Buddhism, "Great Vehicle" Buddhism, was established around the first century

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[19] Nagata Mizu, trans. by Paul B. Watt, "Transitions in Attitudes toward Women in the Buddhist Canon: The Three Obligations, the Five Obstructions, and the Eight Rules of Reverence," In Barbara Ruch ed., *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in Mahāyāna Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angels, California: University of California Press, 1985), 284.

[20] Satha-Anand, "Buddhism on Sexuality and Enlightenment," 118.

B.C.E in India. The main teaching places emphasis on saving others and differs from early Indian Buddhism. Some people share the opinion that "the prediction regarding the shortened lifespan of Buddhism due to the admission of women to the monastic orders actually dates from the time when early Indian Buddhism was challenged and threatened by the Mahayana, which had occurred about 500 years after the founding of Buddhism."[21]

Generally speaking, Mahāyāna Buddhism has four groups of members: monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. This compares to Theravāda Buddhism, which is based on the Elder tradition and is sometimes referred to simply as early Indian Buddhism, and has only two components: monks and nuns.[22] Spreading salvation to many people, Mahāyāna created new ideals for adopting the Buddhist teachings to new situations. Also many sutras were written as a means of propagation. One of the major sutras is the *Lotus Sutra* written around 200 C.E., and the concept of the inferiority of women is clearly expressed in this sutra.

The inferiority of women in Mahāyāna Buddhism is characterized by the following: the five obstructions, the three obligations, and the transformation of the female sex. The five obstacles refer to the exclusion of women from five forms of rebirth: the female body cannot become a Brahma god king, the god Śakra, king Mara, a sage-king turning the wheel, or a Buddha body. The word "obstacle" comes from the Sanskrit word which means "status" or "position.[23] This concept of the five

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[21] Gross, *Buddhism after Patriarchy*, 33.

[22] Senarat Wijayasundara, "Restoring the Order of Nuns to the Theravādin Tradition," *Buddhist Women Across Cultures*, ed., Karma Lekshe Tsomo (NY: New York State University Press, 1999), 79

[23] Ōsumi Kazuo and Nishiguchi Junko ed., *Josei to bukkyō: sukui to oshie* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1989), 15-16.

obstructions is considered to have been created after the first century B.C.E,[24] and appears in the Devadatta chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, in which the changing of female sex is introduced as a parable. The story in this chapter concerns the eight-year-old daughter of the dragon king who achieves Buddhahood by being transformed magically into a man.[25] The girl has an understanding of the Buddhist Law and her merits are perfect, but since the girl cannot attain the status of a Buddha with her female body, this transformation is necessary.

The three obligations state that a woman must be under the control of her father when she is a child, her husband when she marries, and her son when she is old. This doctrine is based on the Indian code of Manu written around the time of Christ. The code contains discipline for Hindu life and emphasizes the hierarchic privilege of the Brahman, the highest rank in the caste system, as well as men over women.

These three concepts differ from each other, but all of them deny women's sexuality. There were not such discriminatory doctrinal teachings in early Indian Buddhism, but those newly added concepts of women's inferiority after the death of the Buddha spread to Asia through Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially to China, Korea, and Japan. By the middle of the first century Buddhism reached China where Confucianism, which values loyalty to family and rulers, was the dominant ideology. Initially there was a conflict between Confucianism and Buddhism, but Buddhism gradually gained popularity. Within the development of Buddhism across cultures, the Buddhist teachings mixed together with various native beliefs, thus promoting the idea of

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[24] Kajiyama Yūichiro, "Women in Buddhism," *Eastern Buddhism, New Series*, 15:2 (1982), 53-70, quoted in Gross, *Buddhism after Patriarchy*, 33.

women's inferiority in Buddhism, a concept that will be explored in greater detail in the third chapter.

[25] *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma: The Lotus Sutra*, trans., Leon Hurvitz (NY: Columbia University Press, 1976), 195-201.

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM IN JAPAN

When Buddhism was transmitted to Japan in the middle of the sixth century, one millennium had already passed since its establishment in India. While Buddhist teachings were developed in China and Korea, they mixed with various other indigenous cultures and religions. Their diversity progressed as time passed.

As examined in the previous chapter, women's position in Buddhism was not equal to men's. All founders of Buddhist sects in Japan, just as in India, China, and Korea, were men, and it appears that women were removed from this history almost completely, thereby blurring the actual status of women in Buddhism. In fact, women were made to follow a difficult path in both religious and secular life in Japan by the rise of the Pure Land belief and the influence of Confucian ideology. However, women's active roles in Japanese Buddhism have emerged through the efforts of many scholars in recent years. In this chapter, I will demonstrate women's contribution to the development of Japanese Buddhism and how Buddhism came to plunge women into wretchedness through incremental societal changes up until the medieval period.

The Introduction of Buddhism to Japan

Scholars debate the exact year of the official introduction of Buddhism, as either 538 or 552, when the Korean emperor sent Buddhist statues and sutras to the Japanese court. Although the research is inconclusive, the year 552 corresponds to the second period of the decline of the Buddhist Law that will culminate with the era of *mappō* –

the end of the Buddhist Law – in 1052.[26] In the sixth century, Buddhism was received by the Japanese court in an effort to adapt itself to the more developed cultures of China and Korea. It is believed that the introduction of Buddhism had already occurred before its official introduction when short trade routes connected Korea and the southern area of Japan (Kyūshū). This is also suggested by many Buddhist relics excavated there from much earlier periods.[27]

Buddhism did not play a significant role in Japan at first, and in fact faith in Buddhism became an issue at court. Soga no Iname (d. 570), the minister who possessed the most power at court in the sixth century, claimed that the court should protect Buddhism. Other politicians, however, especially Mononobe no Okoshi, a rival politician of Iname's, objected to the devotion of Buddhism as profanity.[28] There was conflict over the protection of this new religion, but Iname enshrined Buddhist statues at his house in Mukura and turned it into a Buddhist temple. At this time Buddhism was on the verge of gaining influence in Japan, but the court suppressed Buddhism after the death of Iname. It was Iname's son, Soga no Umako (d. 626), who solidified the foundation for Buddhism's development. He became a court minister and succeeded in protecting Buddhism through his own political power. Umako defeated rival clans, and even plotted the assassination of the emperor. Finally, he appointed his niece as empress, Empress Suiko (592-628), and the empress's nephew as the crown prince,

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[26] This idea will be examined in detail later in this chapter.

[27] Inoue Mitsusada, *Nihon kodai no kokka to bukkyō* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1971), 9.

[28] There was no systematized doctrine at that time, but Shintō existed as the Japanese indigenous religion and people worshipped various gods. The word Shintō changed in history, but in the thirteenth century, when Shintō began to develop its own doctrinal system, the term started to be used to identify the indigenous religion system. Kasahara Kazuo ed., *A History of Japanese Religion* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 2003), 299.

Prince Shōtoku (573-621). The court was greatly changed by this political reformation and Buddhism started to develop in Japan under the politics of the Soga clan.

Shōtoku was the chief of most political matters during the reign of Empress Suiko, and it is said that he was also a believer in the Buddhist teachings. Projects to promote Buddhism were started during Prince Shōtoku's lifetime and the first Buddhist temple, the temple Asuka (also called the temple Hōryū) was constructed in 596. One of Shōtoku's most significant accomplishments was the establishment of the first Japanese Constitution, the Seventeenth-Article Constitution (604). Although he devoted himself to Buddhism, the Constitution was based on Confucianism, which had been transmitted from Korea to Japan in the fifth century. The main idea of Confucianism is that "the universe consisted of three realms, Heaven, Earth, and Man, with man playing a key creative role between the other two."[29] Shōtoku adopted this idea to the Constitution in the third article: "The lord is Heaven; the vassal Earth. Heaven overspreads; Earth upbears. When this is so, the four seasons follow their due course, and the powers of Nature develop their efficiency."[30] He positioned the emperor at the center of the country and tried to defend the sovereignty of the emperor in order to rule the country by gathering all the power in the capital. Even though Confucianism was essential to the Constitution, Shōtoku also discussed the importance of Buddhism in the second article:

> Reverently worship the Three Treasures, namely, the Buddha, the Law, and the Order. These are the final refuge of all beings, the most sublime objects of faith in all the world. How then should anyone of any time not venerate them? There are few people who are truly depraved. If they are

[29] Wm Theodore de Bary, Donald Keene, George Tanabe, and Paul Varley, compiled., *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2001), 41.

[30] Ibid., 41.

> well taught, people will generally obey the dictates of Truth. But if they do not take refuge on the Three Treasures, with what can their crookedness be made straight?[31]

The Buddhist belief, that people should discard their ego and follow the Buddhist Law, was used to support regulations based on Confucian ideas. In this way, Buddhism associated with other beliefs from its inception.

The First Ordained Japanese Buddhist

With the establishment of Buddhism in Japan, there was a notable fact concerning women: the first Japanese who renounced the world was a woman. She became a nun at the age of eleven and was given a Buddhist name, Zenshin-ni.[32] It was not common to become a nun at such a young age in the history of Buddhism. For example, in India, many women renounced the world after the Buddha gave permission to them, but they were not as young as Zenshin-ni. Most Indian women who chose to live as nuns had undergone some experiences which drove them to do so.

Zenshin-ni's renunciation is interpreted in various ways when discussing women's position in Japanese Buddhism. Bernard Faure claims that Zenshin-ni's role was passive: "The hapless 'nuns' were defrocked, imprisoned, and flogged."[33] It was actually reported that the court suppressed the three nuns. They received cruel

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[31] Ibid., 59.

[32] Even though many statues and sutras had already been brought into Japan, Buddhism was still a "foreign" religion and there was no didactic form of Buddhism at the time of Empress Suiko's reign. So someone was needed to fulfill the lack of actual religious activities of Buddhism such as performing rituals. When Umako built a temple and enshrined a statue of Miroku, he appointed Shima, a daughter of Shiba Tatto, to present an offering to it and she became a nun in 584. Two of her maids also took the tonsure and adopted the religious names, Zenzō-ni and Ezen-ni. Zenshin-ni and the other two nuns went to Kudara, one of the countries in ancient Korea, to learn Buddhism for the first time in Japanese history and became fully ordained Buddhists.

[33] Bernard Faure, *The Power of Denial*, (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 29.

punishments and had a difficult time living as Buddhists.[34] Taking into consideration that they did not take the tonsure of their own will, their renunciation could be misread as a sign of women's inferior position at that time. Although it is true that politicians pushed those nuns into unfortunate circumstances, their main goal was to use their political power to promote Buddhism as a part of national cultural development. The problem about the early renunciation of Zenshin-ni must be explored in broader contexts.

Apart from politics, there are three possible reasons for the renunciation of Zenshin-ni: first, her language ability; second, her magico-religious power as a medium; and third, the historical background of Buddhism's development on the continent.

The first point is based on the fact that Shiba Tatto, Zenshin-ni's father, was originally from the continent and helped Umako in promoting Buddhism. It is quite possible that Zenshin-ni could read Chinese, as this would have helped in interpreting Buddhist sutras written in Chinese. That being said, Chinese was not a completely incomprehensible language at that time since *kanbun*, the written language form of Chinese, was commonly used by men at court to keep official records. Even though it would be hard to read complicated doctrinal works, there would have been appropriate (male) officers to translate Buddhist sutras and to become Buddhist priests to engage in such work. Furthermore, it seems unreasonable to entrust this important role to women since it was men who dealt with politics and other important duties. With this consideration, it becomes clear that the other two points were probably more significant.

[34] Katsuura Noriko, *Kodai chūsei no josei to bukkyō* (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppan, 2003), 7.

Ever since ancient times, the Japanese believed in powers beyond human existence and relied on them to have a peaceful life. Mediums were therefore central figures in daily life, since they could convey messages to and from the gods through possession. Umako may have hoped that Zenshin-ni could bridge the gap between Japanese native religion and Buddhism, since she was a medium. However, Katsuura Noriko argues that it is improbable because nuns also served as mediums in the sixth century. Moreover, there were also male mediums and this implies that there would be no difference between men and women in serving the gods.[35] She does not deny that the relationship between shamanism and Buddhism was intimate, but she emphasizes two points: magico-religious power was already included in Buddhism before Buddhism was transmitted to Japan, and both monks and nuns were entrusted with the ritual of curing illness. In addition, Katsuura supports the idea that women had important roles on the continent, citing evidence that nuns were often used to examine and translate sutras in both China and Korea.

Court Buddhism and State Buddhism

Japanese Buddhism throughout the Nara and Heian periods (645-1185) is often divided into two types: court Buddhism (*kyūtei Bukkyō*) and state Buddhism (*kokka Bukkyō*). Each type of Buddhism had two aspects according to how it was employed.[36] Court Buddhism is considered to have begun at the middle of the seventh century and state Buddhism started in the late seventh century. Court Buddhism means that

[35] Ibid., 7-8.

[36] Hongō Masatsugu, "State Buddhism and Court Buddhism: the Role of Buddhism from the Seventh to the Ninth Ceturies," trans. by Masayo Kaneko, in Ruch, *Engendering Faith*, 41.

members of the imperial court devoted themselves to the religious power of Buddhism in order to cure illness and prolong life, while state Buddhism refers to the phenomenon that state bureaucrats promoted Buddhism officially to protect the country and strengthen the position of the emperor.[37] Japanese indigenous religions were intended to ensure good crops, cures for illness, and the wealth of the country. Most importantly, people relied on the power of magic. Buddhism also has a belief in various superior beings, but the Buddhist teachings still advocated the individual's salvation. Even though there was a big difference between Buddhism and Japanese folk religions in their religious goals, the court promoted Buddhism with the belief that Buddhism would work in the same way as the indigenous religions.

A notable characteristic of court Buddhism is that women took on important roles to promote Buddhism. First of all, the Nara period (710-785) is outstanding in Japanese imperial history in that there were many female emperors. As Buddhism established its base during the reign of Empress Suiko in the Asuka period (552-645), Buddhism permeated the court culture through the empresses' patronization in the Nara period. The members of the imperial court had monks and nuns live at their residences in order to conduct religious services.[38] According to Katsuura, these monks and nuns who stayed at residences of the elite (*kasō*) were considered to have performed rituals in coordination. More important, it was a nun who supervised the religious organizations of each residence and nuns administered Buddhist facilities with the court women.

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[37] Hongō Masatsugu explains that state Buddhism overlapped with court Buddhism from the seventh to the ninth century since important roles to maintain the country were conducted at the court by aristocrats, who were supported Buddhism. See Hongō Masatsugu, "State Buddhism and Court Buddhism: the Role of Buddhism from the Seventh to the Ninth Centuries," 41.

[38] Katsuura, *Kodai chūsei no josei to bukkyō*, 12-13.

Among the empresses and the court women, Empress Kōmyō (701-760, reign), who was the empress of Emperor Shōmu (701-756, reign), patronized Buddhism the most. She promoted the copying of sutras at her quarters and turned her former residence into a nunnery, Hokke Metsuzai no Tera (Temple of the Lotus of Atonement for Sin) in 741.[39] She propagated Buddhism not only at court but also nationwide, and she ordered the establishment of official temples and nunneries (741). Of course, Emperor Shōmu was also a key person in this process, but Empress Kōmyō was the central power behind the promotion of Buddhism. Court Buddhism was therefore linked with the development of state Buddhism in the eighth century.

State Buddhism is believed to have been established during the reign of Emperor Tenmu (d. 702). Although he was a Buddhist, he de-emphasized the devotion of Buddhism at court and engaged in Shintō ceremonies in order to reinforce the status of the emperor by using religious ideology that regarded the emperor as a god.[40] Shintō and Buddhism coexisted in Japan, but Buddhism was subordinated to Shintō at that time. The noticeable characteristic of state Buddhism is that the court controlled Buddhism by means of *Sōniryō* (Regulations for Monks and Nuns), that was included as a part of the Taihō Code (710). All the actions of monks and nuns were controlled. It was prohibited, for example, to go begging or conduct any esoteric training deep in the mountains without the permission of an administrator of monks and nuns. Most importantly, no one could take the tonsure freely. The court regulated the number of

[39] The "sin" in the name waas thought to refer women's sin, but it was revealed that "sin" is all human's sin. Ibid., 18-19.

[40] Hongō Masatsugu, "State Buddhism and Court Buddhism: the Role of Buddhism from the Seventh to the Ninth Centuries," 44.

monks and nuns and increased that number when praying for a sick emperor or other imperial family members. Moreover, in the late seventh century the government created a new system concerning the ordinations, that is the yearly ordinands (*nenbundosha*). This called for ten men and women to become ordinandS per year to become oficial monks and nuns. The system greatly changed in 806 when a certain number of yearly ordinands were assigned to each sect.

The reason behind this control of numbers was that the court feared that Buddhists could gain power over the people and that this situation could lead to movements against the court. One of the outcomes of this fear was the suppression of the active propagation of Buddhism by Gyōki (668-749). Gyōki took the tonsure in 682 and wandered around the Kansai area to spread the Buddhist teachings by himself. He not only preached but also helped local people establish temples, bridges, and irrigation systems. It was also remarkable that many of the temples he constructed were nunneries.[41] Katsuura points out the increase of female followers was due to the combination of Gyōki's charisma and the change of women's societal status by the introduction of Confucian ideology in the eighth century. Many of his followers were from the Kinki area which was the center of politics and culture, so the Confucian ideology of family, which is a patriarchal family system, affected women's lives. In the Heian period, ordinary people suffered from heavy taxation and that was one of the reasons for their renunciation. Of course the state government did not want to lose the source of state income, so it regulated religious groups like Gyōki's. However, the

[41] Gyōki constructed forty-nine temples in the Kansai area and one-third of them were nunneries. Yoshida Kazuhiko, *Josei to bukkyō wo meguru shomondai*, 14.

societal situation had a different aspect in the case of women. Women supported their families, but men were central figures in the patriarchal society and women had to be in the shade of men. This circumstance would lead women to seek their own salvation from Gyōki.

A number of people renounced the world following Gyōki and the court considered this perilous and clamped down on Gyōki's group using *Sōniryō*.[42] However, the court started to use Gyōki's charismatic power for construction of Buddhist temples and other public works in the middle of the eighth century. Gyōki's propagation against *Soniryō* was quite progressive, and he had an important role in the spread of Buddhism in secular society. The court apparently controlled Buddhism, but the teachings spread widely.[43]

As mentioned above, the court controlled the number of monks and nuns by *Sōniryō*, but Buddhism spread so widely among the common people through propagation by Buddhists like Gyōki that there were a lot of people who became monks and nuns outside the court's jurisdiction. Here the definition of "monks and nuns" starts to be ambiguous. When characters for monks, *sō*, and nuns, *ama*/*ni*, appear in literature, there are often no clear identifications, especially for nuns. Basically monks and nuns refer to *biku* and *bikuni* and male and female novices are called *shami* and *shamini*. In addition, there is one more category only for female and that is probationary nuns: *shikishamana*, which has a position between *bikuni* and *shamini*. The next section will examine the complex ordination system in Japan.

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[42] This Gyōki's propagation was recorded as Gyōki setsuwa (Tales of Gyōki) in *Nihonryōiki*.

[43] In the Kantō and Tōhoku areas as well, Buddhism gained popularity among the people, both male and female.

The Ordination System

The ordinations accorded to the rules of the Vinaya (*ritsu*), which were formed while the Buddha was alive, and they are the source for monastic discipline and procedure to be followed in the Buddhist orders. The Vinaya also provided the basic categories of a hierarchy of practitioners, and in this hierarchy, nuns were considered to be equal to monks.[44] Among the various Vinaya, the fourfold Vinaya (*shibunritsu*) was mainly used in East Asia. In Japan, in addition to the fourfold Vinaya, the Brahmā Net Sutra (*Bonmyōkyō*) was the source text for the ordinations. It seems that there is no difference between the ordinations for monks and those for nuns since the same texts were used for the ordinations in Japan, but nuns had to take the ordination twice, first in the order nuns and then in the order of monks.[45]

The ordinations for each type of monk and nun differ and only *biku* and *bikuni* received the full ordination. Moreover, the full ordination was categorized into three patterns: 1) officially sanctioned ordinations, 2) privately performed ordinations, and 3) the self-ordination.[46] The first category of ordinations was performed for monks and nuns who inhabited the state-sponsored temples, such as Tōdai-ji in Nara or official temples and nunneries. Monks and nuns who took this ordination were considered to be officially ordained monks and nuns (*kansōni*). The second type of ordination was not as strict as officially sanctioned ordinations and various percepts were used. Official monks performed this ordination but the state did not recognize it. A typical private

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[44] Paul Groner, "Vicissitudes in the Ordination of Japanese "Nuns" during the Eighth through the Tenth Centuries," in *Engendering Faith*, 65.

[45] Ibid., 65.

[46] Ibid., 66-69.

ordination was that performed by Gyōki. Many people took ordinations conducted by Gyōki, but they were not recognized by the state.[47] The third type of the ordination was similar to the private ordination, but no organization or teachers were needed.

The fact that there were two types of ordination performed without the recognition of the state government proves that Buddhism was recognized widely by commoners. During the Nara and Heian periods, however, the policies of state Buddhism overpowered religious acts among people, and this influenced the decline of nuns' positions in Japanese Buddhism. As mentioned in the previous section, the court controlled the number of monks and nuns (this only refers to the officially ordained monks and nuns) and the ratio of monks and nuns gradually became unequal through the Heian period, and eventually, official nuns completely disappeared.[48]

The most crucial factor in their disappearance was that the reestablishment of officially sanctioned ordinations by Chien-chen (Ganjin, 688-763). The government invited Chien-chen to introduce orthodox ordinations because it could not be said that the ordination strictly followed the original rules even though Japanese court had performed the ordination for official monks and nuns.[49] After the arrival of Chien-chen all official monks and nuns had to re-ordained. Here the problem arose that the official ordination could not be performed any longer because only three nuns came to Japan with Chien-chen despite the fact that ten qualified nuns were needed for orthodox

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[47] The private ordination performed by Gyōki was recognized by the government and some of those ordinants became official monks and nuns in 731. Ibid., 68.

[48] In 624 the number of monks was 816 and the number of nuns was 569, and the number of nuns was decreased to the ratio that monks and nuns were two to one. (This number was for monks and nuns at official temples and nunneries.) See, Katsuura, 9-30.

[49] Groner, "Vicissitudes in the Ordination of Japanese "Nuns" during the Eighth through the Tenth Centuries," 75.

ordinations.[50] In addition to the distinction of the official ordination for nuns, there were no influential court women who could patronize nuns like Empress Kōmyō had and in fact there was no female emperor after Kōken (749-758).[51] In the late Nara period, the Emperor-centered *Ritsuryosei* form of govenment was established and it was also the time when state Buddhism was firmly established. Thus women were eliminated from both politics and Buddhism and that led to the decline in women's status.

The Development of Sects

The Heian government presided over the development of Japanese Buddhism, and women were persecuted by the establishment of an androcentric nation. However, the development of Japanese Buddhism itself also influenced women's subordination to men. In the Nara period, there were six sects, the so called Nara Six Schools (*nantorokushū*): the Sanron, Hossō, Kegon, Ritsu, Jōjitsu, and Kusha schools. Although each school differed from the others according to which doctrines they followed, they were just an extension of Chinese sects and they did not develop into distinctive schools at that time.[52] The first sectarian movement in Japan took place in the early eighth century when Saichō (767-822) established the Tendai sect and Kūkai (774-835) founded the Shingon sect.

Although almost all monks and nuns were official ones and Buddhism apparently worked only within national regulations until the Heian period, various

[50] Ibid., 75.
[51] She was a daughter of Empress Kōmyō and became the first and last nun-emperor in Japan.
[52] Kasahara, *Kodai chūsei no josei to bukkyō*, 68 and 102.

Buddhist teachings had been transmitted to Japan ever since its introduction, and there had been monks who focused on studying different sutras and conducted ascetic practice deep in the mountains. Both Saichō and Kūkai went to China to study the teachings in 804, and after retuning Saichō started the Tendai sect on Mont Hiei and Kūkai founded the Shingon sect on Mont Kōya. Both the Tendai and Shingon sects were officially recognized and supported by the court, and they became the main Buddhist sects in Japan.

As they gained popularity, the Tendai and Shingon sects came to occupy the number of yearly male ordinandS and this led to the extinction of officially sanctioned nuns. The Tendai and Shingon sects did not exclude women as a whole, but they started to emphasize the importance of seclusion (*rōzan*) especially for men who were started their monastic career. Both sects banned women from entering the mountains, where monks were conducting training, in order to prevent sexual temptations.[53] This alienation of women was called *Nyonin kinsei* or *Nyonin kekkai* and barriers (in many cases they were stones called *kekkai seki*) were set in the middle of sacred mountains. Although the seclusion was conducted both in India and China, it was only Japanese Buddhism in which *nyonin kekkai* was practiced. There are a few explanations about the origin of *nyonin kekkai*, but the main reason was considered to be the impurity of women (this idea of women's impurity will be discussed in the next chapter). The development of sects affected women's status in comparison to men during the Heian period, and this disparity became more severe in later centuries.

[53] Groner, "Vicissitudes in the Ordination of Japanese "Nuns" during the Eighth through the Tenth Centuries," 77. This concept "*nyoninkinsei*" will be examined in details in the third chapter.

Pure Land Belief

One of the most influential Buddhist teachings from the Heian period is Pure Land belief (*Jōdo shinkō*). The devotees believe that they can be reborn in the western Pure Land ruled by Amitābha Buddha just through the power of the nembutsu. This belief was transmitted from China with other various teachings and studied deeply by Tendai monks in the late ninth century in Japan. Just as Buddhism had itself, the Pure Land teachings spread first in the court at the beginning of the tenth century. The court people engaged with this belief in order to pray for deceased family members, but at first it was hard for them to devote themselves to this belief since the teachings implied that life at the court, refined and elegant, was an impure land (*edo*).[54] However, Pure Land beliefs gained popularity in the tenth century when the court became unstable because of disturbances over the throne. It was also a time when the warrior class started to gain power. The teaching that anyone can be reborn in the Pure Land only by the *nembutsu* – reciting the name of Amitābha Buddha (*namu amidabutsu*) – attracted warriors who committed the sin of killing people.

One of the first Buddhists who engaged in the spread of this belief was a Tendai monk Kūya (903-972). He wandered around the country teaching the Pure Land beliefs to commoners so he was called "the saint of the streets." As Gyōki did, he helped people with building temples and digging wells. Thus the Pure Land belief spread widely outside of the court, and in turn the movement also affected those in the court. In the tenth century, the most significant work espousing the Pure Land beliefs was

[54] Inoue, *Nihon kodai no kokka to bukkyō*, 133.

written by a Tendai monk Genshin (942-1017): *Ōjōyōshū* (The Essentials of Salvation, 985). The work emphasizes the importance of the belief by describing the Buddhist hells. It also teaches that the *nembutsu* is the most appropriate way to attain the goal of salvation.

Pure Land beliefs were recognized and accepted by people in every rank through the tenth century, but the most innovative movement in Japanese Pure Land beliefs occurred in the twelfth century. The concept of *mappō*, the Decay of the Buddhist Law, influenced the spread of the Pure Land teaching. Since the early history of Buddhism, there had been the concept of three periods of Buddhist Law:

> The period in which the teachings of Śākamuni Buddha are transmitted faithfully by those who form the core of the Buddhist Order and in which practitioners are able to attain enlightenment is know as the period of the Righteous Law (*Shōbō*). The age in which, though the teachings are preserved and practiced, enlightenment is no longer possible is known as the period of the Counterfeit Law (*Zōbō*). The age in which only the written teachings remain and neither practice nor attainment is possible is knows as the period of the Decay of the Law (*Mappō*).[55]

In Japan, it was believed that the world entered *mappō* in 1052, the middle of the Heian period, and it was the time when society was about to shift to a world of war.

Pure Land beliefs were initially developed by Tendai monks and one of the monks, Hōnen (1133-1212), focused on the practice of *nembutsu* in order to guide people to the Buddhist Way during *mappō*. Hōnen strongly believed that it was useless to do esoteric practices since people could not hope to attain enlightenment during *mappō*. He developed his teachings in *Senchaku hongan nembutsushū* (Choosing the

[55] Kasahara Kazuo ed., *A History of Japanese Religion* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 2003), 125.

Recitation of the Buddha's Name According to the Original Vow) in 1198. His teaching was quite radical for its time and it was criticized by many monks such as Myōe, who engaged in the revival of traditional Buddhism, especially the Kegon sect. Myōe wrote *Zaijarin* (Smashing the Evil Chariot) in order to attack Hōnen's Pure Land teachings and defend a pluralism of practices. As a result, *Senchaku hongan nembutsushū* was banned, even though it was widely known until the beginning of the thirteenth century.

Even though Hōnen's idea gained no attention while he was alive, his followers continued to promote his teaching and they eventually formed a sect, the Pure Land sect (*Jōdoshū*). One of the followers, Shinran (1173-1262), developed Hōnen's teachings and established the True Pure Land sect (*Jōdoshinshū*). Shinran denied *jiriki* (self effort) completely and relied on only *tariki* (other effort) in order to be reborn in the Pure Land. He states, "Even a good person can attain birth in the Pure Land, so it goes without saying that an evil person will."[56] This sounds paradoxical, but what is implied in this sentence is that an evil person does not have any hope to be reborn in the Pure Land because of his bad deeds so he must rely totally on the compassion of Amitābha Buddha. A good person, on the other hand, tried to make an effort by himself since he knows what he should do in order to attain rebirth in the Pure Land. Shinran's teaching was that reciting only one *nembutsu* was enough and this easy way attracted many people, especially secular people who could not engage in difficult practices.

[56] This line is in *A Record in Lament of Divergencies* (*Tannishō*), which is the collection of sayings of Shinran, by Yuienbō. Quoted in *Source of Japanese Tradition*, compiled by Keen Donald, et al., 228.

The spread of Pure Land beliefs is often considered to have exacerbated the women's declining position in Buddhism, but it also created discrimination against women. What forwarded this was the spread of the concepts of women's inferiority. Although the five obstructions, the three obligations, and the transformation of the female sex were transmitted to Japan much earlier, it is thought that they were not taken seriously until the eighth century.[57] In contrast, female emperors in the Nara period used the concept of the transformation of the female sex in a positive way.[58] However, the affirmative acceptance of the concept stopped as patronage of Buddhism by powerful female emperors disappeared and the concepts of women's inferiority was gradually developed into negative ones by the ninth century. Thus the salvation of women by Pure Land beliefs was presumed on those concepts. Buddhists even taught that women who could not be reborn easily in the Pure Land could be saved by the reciting *nembutsu*. Women were trapped in an expedient salvation.

The Japanese Medieval Period

The rise of the Pure Land coincided to one big societal change: the transmission from a peaceful society to an unstable one. In 1185, the battle between the Minamoto clan and Taira clan, which started around 1180, ended with the victory of the Minamoto clan. Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147-1199) established a military government in Kamakura, and according to most historians this is considered to be the beginning of the

[57] Katsuura, *Kodai chūsei no josei to bukkyō*, 23.

[58] There was skilful means (*hōben*) ABOUT the transformation of THE female body. It is said that Busokuten, who was the only female emperor in China, developed the concept that Miroku bodhisattva transformed into a woman to teach people to become an emperor. The idea was to raise women's status by emphasizing that woman was the original substance of bodhisattva. Ibid., 22.

medieval period. The medieval period continued until unification of the country by Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616) in 1600. The medieval period is categorized into three reigns according to the shifts of political powers: the Kamakura period (1185- 1333), the Muromachi period (1133-1573), and the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1573-1600).

The court in Kyoto maintained power at the beginning of the Kamakura period, but the Kamakura shogunate started to take control after the Jōkyū Disturbance (1212).[59] Large temples such as Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei and Tōdai-ji in Nara had strong connections to the court, so they possessed power in the religio-political world at the beginning of the medieval period. But those temples came under the control of the shogunate together with the court after the Jōkyū Disturbance and Buddhism also began to change.

Four new Buddhist sects emerged in the medieval period: Pure Land, Zen, Ritsu, and Nichiren. Shintō also developed and coexisted with Buddhism in this period. One of the most significant influences on the development of Buddhism in this period is the rise of the warrior. As explained in the previous section, an unstable society itself influenced people's devotion to Buddhism, but the rise of warriors was an important factor in this as well. New warrior administrations established temples in rural areas in order to compete culturally with the imperial court.[60] This helped to spread the Buddhist teachings to the rest of Japan. The Pure Land was one of the most influential sects, but Zen flourished through the support of warriors in the Muromachi period. Saichō and Kūkai had already adopted Zen teachings in their doctrines, but they only used the

[59] Go-Toba tried to overthrow the Kamakura shogunate, but it failed and he was sent into exile.
[60] Bodiford, "The Medieval Period: Eleventh to Sixteenth Centuries," 164

teachings to support their principal disciplines. Zen denies the authority of sutras and embraces practices such as seated meditation. Many warriors devoted themselves to Zen teachings since the focus on religious practices matched the warriors' life work, which was the practice of martial arts.

There were two main Zen sects established in this period: the Rinzai sect by Eisai (1141-1215) and the Sōtō sect by Dōgen (1200-1253). Eisai was the first Japanese Buddhist who studied Zen fully in China. Event though there were many followers in Japan, Eisai refused to formulate a sect. But later the Rinzai sect was established based on his teachings. Dōgen, who was a disciple of Eisai, went to China to seek other teachings and he studied the Sōtō sect of Zen Buddhism. The difference between Rinzai and Sōtō is that Rinzai relied on various practices such as kōans and meditation and Sōtō focused on seated meditation as the most important practice. Although Zen emphasizes the importance of practices and denied scriptural authorities, one of the important tracts in Japanese Buddhism was written by Dōgen, that is *Shōbōgenzō* (True Dharma Eye Treasury).

One of the important aspects of Zen is the influence on Japanese culture. It is thought that Eisai wrote a book about tea, which was introduced to Japan as medical drink, and it developed into the tradition of the tea ceremony in the medieval period. Not only Zen, but also Buddhism as a whole, had a significant role in the development of literature. It was in the medieval period that many religious ideas and practices

appeared in written forms.[61] The synchronization of the spread of literacy and the Buddhist teachings in society formed one of the characteristics of the medieval period.

[61] Ibid., 170.

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN'S GENDER ROLE IN *KANKYO NO TOMO*

In the medieval period, new literary arts were created due to changes in society and through the influence of Buddhism. There are literary genres which exemplify this period: *gunki monogatari* (war tales), *renga* (linked verse) and *nō* (theater). *Gunki monogatari* were products of an unstable society and directly reflected the transition from the Heian period to the Kamakura period. Linked verse is an extended form of *waka* (poems which consist of thirty-one syllables). The tradition of *waka*, which was well established in the Heian period by the court, was further enriched by famous poets such as Kamo no Chōmei (d. 1216), who is one of the most important figures in the medieval period and in Japanese literary history as a whole. Nō plays were developed from *sarugaku*, a form of theater widely performed in the Heian period in which actors mimed and danced comically. Kan'ami (1333-1384) added a more literary flavor to these dances. This literary flavor eventually came to be expressed as *yūgen* (mysterious beauty) and this became the basis of nō. His son, Zeami (1363-1443), further developed the literary art established by his father and nō plays flourished under the aegis of the Ashikaga shogunate.

Buddhism and Literature

Much of Japanese medieval literature has a unique characteristic—the theme of Buddhism. However, the association of Buddhism and literature was not a sudden development. Even though it is not expressed as strongly as in medieval literature,

Buddhism clearly played a part in some classical literature as well. The earliest influence of Buddhism in literature can be found in the *Man'yōshū* (*Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves*, ca.759). Compiled in the eighth century, it is the oldest anthology of poems in Japan. *Genji monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*, ca.1010), written by Murasaki Shikibu in the mid-Heian period, is considered to be the greatest literary work in Japanese history, and it has a strong Buddhist sensibility in its evocation of court life. One of its characteristics of women and Buddhism in Genji is that the female characters renounced the world after having troubled lives. Renunciation later in life was a common custom for both male and female aristocrats at that time, but women who took the tonsure in *Genji* chose to do so by their own will. It was almost impossible for women, especially women in noble families, to live as they wanted to in the Heian period, but they expressed their individuality by renouncing the world. This reflection of Buddhism in literature also applies to *Heike monogatari* (*The Tale of Heike*, ca.1371), which is the most important war tale of the medieval period. The author of *Heike* is unknown, but it is notable that the war it depicts was embedded in a Buddhist culture. It also shows that women who were depicted in the power-oriented society in the war period entered the Buddhist path to escape from the stresses of the world.

It is remarkable that many literary works in this period were written by Buddhists. Some of the monks who wrote literary works at this time lived in isolation in huts in the mountains (*inja/tonseisha*, recluse), and their works came to be called *inja no bungaku* (recluse literature). The works vary and it is difficult to categorize them as one genre, but the theme of *mujō* (impermanence) is common to all of them. *Hōjōki* (*An*

Account of My Hut, 1212) by Kamo no Chōmei is a good example. Chōmei, depicting disasters in the capital, expresses impermanence by showing how people are attached to material possessions, and how they are troubled by them. Among the many Buddhist teachings, *mujō* was one of the most important teachings and was therefore used often as a main theme in literature.

Even though *monogatari* and war tales incorporated Buddhist sensibilities, this does not mean that those works were used to teach Buddhism to readers. Works like *Hōjōki* convey a strong message of *mujō*, but it has more value as a masterpiece of literary importance. In Japan the first Buddhist work which directly dealt with Buddhist teachings, excluding sutras, was *Ōjōyōshū* (The Essence of Salvation, 985) by Genshin. It concerns the *rokudō* (six realms) and teaches how karma plays a role in one's next life and the importance of devotion to Buddhist teachings and practices. Many other works, such as *Tsurezuregusa* (Essence in Idleness, 1331) by Yoshida Kenkō, were also written by monks in the medieval period.

One of the literary genres that bridged the gap between the courtly *monogatari* and doctrinal works were Buddhist tales, or *setsuwa*. Some *setsuwa* were used to teach people, expressing Buddhist teachings as stories. Many Mahāyāna Buddhists used *hōben* (skillful means) to convey Buddhist teachings through parables, at the same time making the stories easy to read. This aspect came to be as a result of the influence of belief in *mappō*, which is the time period thought to be when people were not able to understand the Buddhist Law (Dharma). Buddhists – both monks and laymen alike – wrote these tales for ordinary people. Also, as many *setsuwa* were based on folk tales, most of the stories were transmitted orally. Through these tales we can see how

Buddhism permeated the lay world and, at the same time, how a new literary genre was developed within the interaction between the Buddhist and the lay worlds.

There are a few well-known collections of Buddhist setsuwa such as *Nihon ryōiki* (*Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition*, ca.823), written by Kyōkai, *Konjaku monogatarishū* (*Tales of Now and Past*, ca.1120), considered to be written by Minamoto no Takakuni at the end of the Heian period, and *Shasekishū* (*Sand and Pebbles*, 1279-1283), authored by Mujū Ichien in the thirteenth century. Each work contains numerous short tales and describes various characteristics of each time period. Through them we can examine not only how Buddhism dealt with people but also how people lived in those works.

Kankyo no Tomo (*A Company in Solitude*)

Until recently it was uncertain who the author of *Kankyo no Tomo* was, but recent research has revealed that the most probable author was Keisei (1189-1268).[62] He was a member of the Kujō family, an influential aristocratic family, but Keisei did not enter the political world like other family members. Instead, he took the tonsure when he was twenty years old.[63] The reason for his renunciation was thought to be due to the fact that he was disabled having been accidentally dropped when he was a little child, which damaged his back. His life as a recluse was recorded in *Shasekishū*:

[62] Minobe Shigekatsu, *Kankyo no Tomo: chūsei no bungaku* (Tokyo: Miyaishoten, 1979), 6-9.

[63] Keisei was a grandson of Kujō Kanezane (1149-1207) who was an influential politician and a devotee of Buddhism. Kanezane lost his two sons, Yoshimichi and Yoshitsune, early and then he helped Yoshitsune's son, Michiie, in politics. Michiie did not gain as much power as his grandfather did, but he was also a devotee of Buddhism and founded Tōfukuji. For some reason there is uncertainty about the exact lineage of Keisei; he is supposedly Michiie's elder brother.

> Shōgetsubō (Keishō, d.1268)[64] of Matsu-no-o belonged to the Mii[dera] school of Tendai and was known to be a conscientious monk. This is the way people say he first became a recluse. Going deep into the Matsu-no-o mountains he took with him provisions for seven days. Setting up a temporary hut, he began his religious exercises. When the seven-day supply was exhausted, he was considering eating dried potato stalks softened in water when he was met by a woodcutter who offered him a day's ration of food as alms. The same thing happened on the following and succeeding days, so that Shōgetsubō never had an opportunity to use the dried potato stalks. Eventually a temple (Hokkeyamadera) was built. The monk continued his austerities and came to a felicitous end. This was a curious thing to happen in these Latter Days. Today those who would strictly practice the religious exercises must not lack food or clothing.[65]

As this story explains, Keisei became a Tendai monk, but he was also devoted to Shingon, which is clarified by a record in which his name was written down as one of the disciples of the Shingon monk Gyōji (1147-1226). He went to China around 1217 and stayed there for a few years, and then built a temple called Hokkeyamadera around 1226 upon his return. Keisei was also known as a poet.[66] It is assumed that Keisei had a good education; there must have been many chances to communicate with literary people since he was in an aristocratic family. Although he chose to renounce and live apart from the secular world, his background as a member of a powerful political family characterized his life as a Buddhist writer. The other significant point about Keisei was his intimate relationship with Myōe (1173-1232). Myōe was both a disciple of Gyōji

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[64] Keisei was called Shōgetsubō Keisei or Keisei Shōnin. The characters for "sei" (政) can be also read "shō."

[65] Robert E. Morrell, *Sand & Pebbles (Shasekkishū): The Tales of Mujū Ichien, A Voice for Pluralism in Kamakura Buddhism* (NY: State University of New York Press, 1985), 251.

[66] Twenty-two poems of Keisei were included in the imperial anthologies. Minobe, *Kankyo no Tomo*, 14.

and his nephew, and Keisei seemed to have been greatly influenced by Myōe in terms of both literature and religion through exchanging letters with him.[67]

Keisei started to write *Kankyo no Tomo* around 1216 and completed it in 1222. It is assumed that he did not spend all six years on the work but wrote other works during this time as well. *Kankyo no Tomo* consists of thirty-two short tales in two books. The tales can be categorized into three parts: tales about people who appear in *ōjōden* (the compilations of tales about people who were reborn in the Pure Land), tales about unknown people who lived apart from the secular world and do not appear in any other documents, and tales about women. The tales about women comprise ten out of the thirty-two stories, and most of them appear in the second book. In the majority of those stories, women are the main characters and their various lives are depicted. This is the first remarkable characteristic of this work. There seemed to be one reason that Keisei most likely wrote this work for a noblewoman. It is probable that one of the following two young noblewomen asked Keisei to write this work: Shikikenmon'in Riko (1197-1251) or Ankamon'in Kuniko (1209-1283), both of whom were considered to be Keisei's relatives.[68] Keisei concludes the work with a line stating that he hoped that the person to whom he dedicated the work would not show it to anyone else. In addition, there are some sentences, such as one that includes the phrase "sits behind brocaded curtains," which imply that a court woman is the reader.[69]

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[67] There is a record which shows that Keisei sent a sutra or some notes written in Persian to Myōe when Keisei went to China in 1217. Ibid., 10.

[68] Shikikanmon'in Toshiko was twenty-six and Akimon'in Kuniko was fourteen respectively at the time when *Kankyo no Tomo* was thought to be completed. Minobe, *Kankyo no Tomo*, 3.

[69] Panday, "Women, Sexuality, and Enlightenment: Kankyo no Tomo," *Monumenta Nipponica*, 50:3 (Autumn 1995), 332.

Another characteristic of *Kankyo no Tomo* is that Keisei focuses on *fujōkan* 不浄観 (Skt. *aśubhabhāvanā*), or meditation on the impurity of the dead body. *Fujōkan* is a part of a Buddhist practice called *kansō* 観想, or the act of contemplating one object in order to realize its true form.[70] The objects of the contemplation vary according to the purpose of each practice, and while *fujōkan* itself has some objects to meditate on, the main point of *fujōkan* is to realize that everything in this world is impure. There is a certain *fujōkan* practice concerned with sexual desire—*kusōkan* 九相観 (the meditation on the nine stages of the process of death and corruption).[71] The nine aspects of the human body during its progressive decay vividly express the impermanence of the human body. Chinese poems were composed to teach this (*kusōshi*) and it is also depicted in paintings (*kusōzu*). The remarkable thing is that the dead body depicted in every painting was a woman. Furthermore, it was only Japanese Buddhism that emphasized *kusōkan* through paintings.[72]

Fujōkan was thought to exist in early Indian Buddhism and appeared in various Buddhist texts, but it was rarely expressed in Buddhist tales. It was also used in *Hosshinshū* (*A Collections of Tales of Religious Awakening*) by Kamo no Chōmei, which was completed around 1216. This was several years before *Kankyo no Tomo*, since Keisei states that he was influenced by this work. Panday points out the similarity

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[70] The original practice is called *kanpō* 観法 (Sanskrit. *vipaśyanā*), that is, the contemplation on Buddhist dharma in order to enlighten.

[71] The nine aspects are: 1) the aspect of recent death (*shinshisō*) 2) the aspect of bloating (*bōchōsō*) 3) the aspect of blood oozing (*chinusō*) 4) the aspect of putridness (*hōransō*) 5) the aspect of being consumed (*seishokusō*) 6) the aspect of blueness (*shōsō*) 7) the aspect of white bones linked (*hakkotsurensō*) 8) the aspect of scattered bones (*kotsusansō*) 9) the aspect of tomb (*kofunsō*). Gail Chin, "The Gender of Buddhist Truth: The Female Corpse in a Group of Japanese Paintings," *Japanese Journal of Religion Studies* 25:3-4 (1998), 280-281.

[72] Ibid., 282.

between the two works, stating that those two texts stand alone among medieval Japanese prose narratives that deal with *fujōkan* directly as a theme and they also retain aesthetic values based on courtly literary traditions.[73] However, the difference between these two works is that Chōmei wrote *Hosshinshū* for his own awakening while Keisei dedicated *Kankyo no Tomo* to a woman. Furthermore, Keisei carefully avoided including tales which appeared in other collections of Buddhist tales.[74]

Kankyo no Tomo is relatively short compared to other Buddhist collections, but the tales in *Kankyo no Tomo* vary in terms of social status and gender of the characters in the tales. The stories show many aspects of religious lives and medieval society itself, but in particular, the tales of women reflect gender problems in Japanese Buddhism. Later parts of this chapter will explore women and Buddhism in medieval Japan focusing on *fujōkan* and women as they appear in these tales.

Sexual Desire and Enlightenment

As noted in the first chapter, sexual desire is considered to be the most difficult human desire from which to detach, and because of that, women were treated unequally to men in Buddhism since women were the objects of sexual desire in an androcentric Buddhist society. *Fujōkan* was created as a practice to subdue sexual desire – meaning

[73] Rajyashree Panday, "Desire and Disgust: Meditations on the Impure Body in Medieval Japanese Narratives." *Monumenta Nipponica* 60, no.3 (Summer 2005): 196.

[74] It is thought that Keisei avoided comparison of his work to other famous works and criticized as Chōmei.

the practice is mainly for monks alone. There is a story in an Indian Buddhist text which is considered to be the basis for *fujōkan* concerning the Buddha. When he was still a prince living a luxurious life in his palace, he saw the awful look of sleeping women in the harem – "the saliva dripping from half-opened mouth and the rigor-mortis-like postures of the sleepers" – in the middle of the night and realized there was no difference between this harem scene and a charnel field strewn with corpses.[75]

The story not only tells us that the Buddha was disgusted by the women but it also connected the scene to the beyond – namely death. The realization of death is counted as one of the four signs – old age, sickness, death, and mendicancy – which are thought to have led the Buddha to renunciation.[76] However, the story of the harem tells how the Buddha realized the meaninglessness of a rich material life, and at the same time, how he felt urged to detach himself from his own sexual desire. It is said that the Buddha urged members of his sangha to go to charnel fields and contemplate the impurity of dead bodies. Wilson calls this teaching "aesthetic shock" and points out that the emphasis on avoidance of women is not enough to subdue a monk's sexual desire. Instead, "the enemy (women as hindrance) must be encountered, engaged, and exposed as a cause of suffering."[77] Women were defined as man's enemy in the sense of being the object of male sexual desire.

Considering the theory of *fujōkan*, it seems to be paradoxical that Keisei focuses on salvation for women as well. There are four stories which deal with *fujōkan* in

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[75] Liz Wilson, *Charming Cadavers: Horrific Figurations of the Feminine in Indian Buddhist Hagiographic Literature* (IL: The University of Chicago Press), 2.

[76] This is also sometimes birth, old age, sickness, and death.

[77] Wilson, *Charming Cadavers*, 18.

Kankyo no Tomo. Three of them are at the end of book one (1:19, 1:20, and 1:21) and one of them is in book two. 1:19 and 1:20 are similar in the sense that the main characters are both men. In 1:21, Keisei depicts the impurity of a dead woman's body which he actually saw. The fourth story is 2:9 and the object of *fujōkan* is a woman and the impurity is as clearly depicted as in 1:21. As noted, most of the stories in book two are about women. It must indicate something important that Keisei put *fujōkan* as a bridge between books one and two. The main points of each *fujōkan* story are different and the ways of using the theory in the stories also vary. These stories contain many problematic realities about women and Buddhism. This section will examine the problem of sexual desire in Japanese Buddhism as it appears in the *fujōkan* stories.

Rationalizing Desire

Among the four stories the one which appears to be the least connected to sexual desire in the four stories is about a low-ranking servant monk who meditated on the impurity of the body and gained an understanding of it (1:19).[78] A low-ranking servant monk on Mount Hiei started going out at dusk and returned to the temple early in the morning. The master noticed this and was convinced that the servant monk was going to Sakamoto, south of Mount Hiei, where monks had relations with prostitutes. The master had another monk follow the servant monk. What the master found out was that the servant monk was crying over a putrefied corpse in a graveyard. The master asked the servant monk about his act at night when he brought a bowl of gruel for breakfast to

[78] For the complete translation, see Panday, "Desire and Disgust."

the master. The master then asked the servant monk to contemplate a bowl of gruel to show him his progress in the practice of contemplation on the impurity of the body. The servant monk contemplated the gruel and surprisingly the gruel turned into white worms. Looking at this, the master cried and asked the monk to guide him to the true path to Buddhahood.

The main point of this story is to tell people that they can attain enlightenment through contemplation on the body's impurity while those who have certain skills or who have become accomplished in certain practices can guide others. This story concludes with an emphasis on food, which is one of the most basic desires of human beings and troubles people regardless of social class and gender. *Fujōkan* is basically a practice concerned with sexual desire, but the point of the teaching is to detach oneself not only from sexual desire but from every desire in this world. Keisei explains in the commentary to this story that human beings can detach themselves from the five desires – color, voice, smell, taste, and touch – by meditating on the impurity of the dead body.[79] Keisei says, "To worry oneself incessantly over changing one's robes in accordance with the season and to lament needlessly over lighting the morning and evening fires is indeed like seeking out the skin of a snake and looking for white worms."[80] As Keisei dramatically changed his way of life – from a member of the noble family to a recluse – he would have realized the attachment of luxurious food, housing, and clothes through bring.

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[79] In Buddhist ideology, there are two combinations of the five desires: one is money, sex, food, honor, and sleep and the other is color, voice, smell, taste, and touch.

[80] Pandey, "Desire and Disgust," 221.

Although this story seems not to be concerned with sexual desire since the gender of the dead body which the servant monk contemplated was not clear, the narrative still explores the violation of having sex. The master monk's first assumption is that the servant monk is having a relationship with a woman, as indicated by his mention of Sakamoto. Nevertheless, the author only alludes to the sin of having sexual intercourse. The fact that Buddhists in the sacred mountains violated the Buddhist law is used to illuminate good acts, which is the monks' sincere devotion to a Buddhist practice.

This contradiction probably reflects the actual situation in the medieval monastic world. On the one hand, Buddhists established sacred monasteries deep in the mountains and appeared to live solemnly, but on the other hand, they were no different from ordinary people in the sense that they too had trouble in detaching themselves from desires. However, the problem is that monks did not always practice ridding themselves of desires but possessed a unique system which concealed their sexual desire.

This system that Japanese monks established is the *chigo* system. The system was already established in the medieval period and spread over sectarian differences. The word *chigo* basically means "child," and it includes infants and little children of both sexes. However, the meaning changes when it is used in Buddhist society. There were young disciples called *dōji* in Buddhist temples and they were classified by their ages and lineages.[81] Among the disciples whom monks favored and with whom they

[81] One classification category is *uewarawa* who were from wealthy houses like those of the court nobles and warriors. Another category, *chūdōji*, was almost the same as *uewarawa* but some boys were from lower class families and they did not study as hard as *uewarawa*. Young disciples who were categorized as *uewarawa* and *chūdōji* were around fourteen years old. There were also grown up disciples called *ōwarawa* who lived just like *uewarawa* and *chūdōji* and had a similar child-like hair style.

had sexual relations were young boys called *chigo*.[82] This is thought to be the the first instance of institutionalized same sex relationships in Japan and it spread over both the court and warrior societies.[83] However, it has to be made clear that homosexuality was prohibited in Buddhism ever since the time of early Indian Buddhism. As we see in Genshin's *Ōjō yōshū* (*Essentials for Rebirth*), homosexuals were thought to fall straight into hell.[84]

Kon Tōkō (1898-1977) wrote the short story "*Chigo*" using the historical document *Kōchigoshōgyōhiden* (meaning *The Secret Teaching of Sacred Chigo*) as the basis of his work.[85] This document is credited to Genshin and explains details of the *chigo* system. Kon happened to find *Kōchigoshōgyōhiden* at Kaizō-in, located in the village of Sakamoto at the foot of Mount Hiei. He states that *Kōchigoshōgyōhiden* is a fake sutra desecrating the name of Genshin, but he admits the importance of the document in Japanese Buddhist history as a key to inquiring into the fall of Buddhim in Japan. This fall was characterized by the *chigo* system and the affirmation of

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[82] In Zen monasteries, young boys who had sexual relationships with monks were *kasshiki*. The original definition of *kasshiki* was monks who called out everyone for meals after the reading of sutra, but the role passed to young boys who did not take the tonsure and these boys were also called *chigo*.

[83] There are two specific terms for male homosexuality in Japanese: *nanshoku* (male love) and *shūdō* (way of the ephebes). Faure points out the vagueness of the word "homosexuality" in the Japanese context. See Faure, *The Red Thread*, 214-218.

[84] Faure, *The Red Thread*, 209.

[85] Kon took the tonsure in 1930 and became an abbot at the Tendai temple Chūsonji in Iwate (Setouchi Jakuchō is now the abbot) in 1966. Two years later he was elected to the House of Councillors. As a novelist, he had studied under Tanizaki Junichirō. Part of *Chigo* was published in 1935, but the work did not appear in its completed shape when it appeared there. Kon does not go into detail about the failure of publication of his complete work so we do not know whether it was because of strict censorship during the war or pressure from Buddhist groups. In 1947, he published the work but changed the content a bit under censorship, and finally the work appeared in its completed form in his collected works. Although the story is about a tragedy of a beautiful *chigo* at Enryaku-ji just like other stories about *chigo* (*chigo monogatari*), but Kon cites many parts of the historical document and depicts the ordination ceremony for *chigo* and the manner of sexual intercourse between the master and the *chigo* clearly. Kon Tōkō, "Chigo," *Kon Tōkō tanpenshū* (Tokyo: Yomiurishinbunsha, 1973), 107-142.

marriage.[86] These violations of Buddhist Law were made into *senryū* (sarcastic poem consisting of seventeen syllables): "Kōbō enters the back gate, Shinran the front."[87] As this *senryū* alludes, Kūkai (Kōbō) was considered to be the one who imported the *chigo* system – and homosexuality – from China. *Kōchigoshōgyōhiden* says that it was passed to the Buddha from the god Konpira in India and transmitted to Tendai Taishi (Chigi, Ch: Chih-i), who founded the Tendai sect in China. However, it also says that *Sannō* (the god of the mountain) taught Saichō about *chigo*. This means that both Kūkai and Saichō are connected to the *chigo* system in Japan. These different origins show the ambiguity of the tradition and, at the same time, how much Buddhists tried to keep the ambivalent system as an important teaching of sacred teachers.

Considering the *chigo* system, two issues arise: how Buddhists admitted the fact that monks had sexual intercourse; and why monks chose young boys as the outlets for their sexual desire. As is already clear, having sexual intercourse is one of the five sins which were defined at the time of the Buddha. The medieval period in Japan is the time when many nunneries were re-established and women were actively engaged in Buddhism. Although there are only a few documents on nuns and nunneries in the Japanese medieval period and their history is not as clear as that for monks, it is believed that female homosexuality was as widely spread among nuns as male homosexuality was among monks. However, even supposing the nuns had sex in nunneries, it is doubtful that they would have chosen young girls as their sexual partners. The assumption may seem ridiculous but this is what developed within the monastic

[86] Kon, "Chigo," 108.

male sangha and male homosexuality developed literarily and culturally. Answers to these questions about *chigo* can shed light on the complex structure of sexual problems in Japanese Buddhism.

A significant point of the chigo system is that disciples who became *chigo* underwent an ordination ceremony called the *chigo kanjō*. Obviously, the ceremony is not the ordinary ordination for monks. It was conducted to turn *chigo* into sacred beings. The explanation of *chigo* in *Kōchigoshōgyōhiden* is

> *Chigo* is the manifestation of *Sannō*. That is the reason why we say '*Chigo* is the first and *Sannō* is the second.' *Chigo* does what *Sannō* does. *Chigo* is *Sannō* from the age of eleven to seventeen. Hence we have *chigo* at the top of the mountain until he becomes seventeen years old.[88]

Besides *Sannō*, some other gods are listed as the same manifestation of *chigo*. A belief in *honji suijaku* (manifest traces of the original substance) was also skillfully used. *Honji suijaku* was developed during the process of the interpenetration of Shinto and Buddhism and it teaches that native gods in Japan are incarnations of the Buddha and bodhisattvas. Buddhists applied this idea to the *chigo* system and turned *chigo* into sacred beings.[89]

The *chigo* system appears to be in accordance with Buddhist teachings because of the ordination ceremony, but the most important role of *chigo*, as manifestations of sacred gods, was to have sex with the monks. According to *Kōchigoshōgyōhiden*, there was a ritual called "Injo (Keibō) no sahō" (bed manners) on the night of the ordination

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[87] Faure, *The Red Thread*, 237.

[88] Kon, "Chigo," 118.

[89] Faure points out that Manjuśrī was well known as the original substance of *chigo*, which is due to the pun on the word *shiri* meaning "buttock" in English. This terminology implies that monks' sexual intercourse with *chigo* was not thought to be a serious sin.

ceremony. A *chigo* spent a night with his master following the proper "manner" to get rid of his master's desire.[90] Furthermore, *Kōchigoshōgyōhiden* gives euphemisms for sexual organs (i.e. penis is *mumyōka*, which means the fire of worldly desire) and explains the manner of sexual intercourse in detail as if it were an important religious ceremony.[91] The ordination was only an arrangement to conceal monks' real intentions, that is to extinguish/satisfy their sexual desire.

The detachment from sexual desire is one attainment in the Buddhist practices. However, in the scheme of the *chigo* system, monks committed the sin of having sexual intercourse for the purpose of attaining enlightenment. Of course, only *chigo* were penetrated by monks and the ejaculation of monks became the accomplishment of an important "practice." Sexual pleasure was replaced with enlightenment, at least in theory. In addition, the sexual relationship between monks and *chigo* was not only a one-time act but a continuous relationship. Even though c*higo* were set up as sacred beings, they were disciples of monks and trapped in the power dynamics of Buddhist society.

The most remarkable point of this system is that *chigo* took the appearance of women – wearing beautiful kimono, putting on make up, and having long hair.[92] As *chigo monogatari* show, *chigo* exchanged love poems with monks and also played

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[90] Kon, "Chigo," 126-131.
[91] Ibid., 129-130.
[92] *Chigo*'s hair style was called *amasogi*, a word used for children and also for nuns. The hair is cut neatly around the shoulders. Tanaka Takako compares women's hair to the *chigo*'s and says the depictions of *chigo*'s hair has more sexual appeal to men than women's hair. See, Tanaka Takako. *Seiai no nihon chûsei* (Tokyo: Chikumashobô, 2004).

musical instruments.[93] *Chigo* got their reputations according to their beauty and skills of composing poems and playing music. High-ranking monks picked beautiful young boys and educated them to be good *chigo*. *Chigo* were considered almost the same as women, especially court ladies. Monks created a gender – Tanaka calls this a "neutral gender" (*nyûtoraru na jendā*) meaning *chigo* were neither male nor female – by transforming young boys into women in monastic society.

The points of the *chigo* system were clear: monks sublimated young boys into sacred beings according to false Buddhist teachings and created a unique gender system in order to satisfy their sexual desires. Although it cannot be ignored that relationships between monks and *chigo* developed into emotional love bonds, the fact that there was a power relationship behind these bonds is significant. As Kon points out, the *chigo* system reflected a human's true character as being troubled by desire and it gives a clear account of interlaced desires in Buddhist society.

Affirming Desire

The monk-*chigo* relationship was perceived as a master-pupil relationship both in Buddhist and lay societies of Japan. It later developed into *shūdō* in samurai

[93] The most famous monogatari is *Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari*, which was written around 1377. For a translation and more details of *chigo monogatari*, see Childs, "Chigo Monogatari. Love Stories or Buddhist Sermons?" *Monumenta Nipponica*, 35:2 (1980), 127-151.

society.[94] While homosexuality thrived at Buddhist monasteries, heterosexual relationships also changed in the medieval period. Story 1:20 gives a clue of the changes in the marriage system. It is the story of a lay married couple. The wife noticed that her husband's attitude toward her changed and suggested they get a divorce in order to live happily for the rest of their lives. The husband said that his love toward her never changed, but realizing the impermanence of this world looking at the skull of a corpse, he began to ponder their relationship. After gazing at the skull, he touched his wife's face in order to examine if there is a difference between a skull of a corpse and his wife's skull. After realizing there was no difference between the corpse and his beloved wife, he left home to seek salvation, saying that he would come back to her when he attained nirvana and take her to the Pure Land with him.[95]

Again, the gender of the corpse which the husband saw in the field in the story summarized in the story summarized in Chapter 3, pp.47-48 is unknown but the object which actually made him realize impermanence was not the corpse but his wife. It was also his wife who broached the subject of divorce. Therefore, we can read the story as the wife providing the husband with the opportunity to enlighten himself. However,

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[94] It has to be mentioned that the Buddhist monastic system did not work as same as it was when Buddhism was established in Japan. Buddhist temples possessed power in politics and also joined wars. There must have been skeptical views about the monastery wherever monks indulged themselves with *chigo*. Even though both the *chigo* system and *shudō* were same-sex relationship, it is difficult to consider them as the same kind of relationship. It is propably true that homosexuality developed from the *chigo* system at temples, but it is important to take into consideration that samurai society was different from monastic society. This thesis does not go deeper into the history of homosexuality in Japan, but further exploration of homosexuality will be useful for the study of feminism in Japan.

[95] For full translation, see Panday, "Desire and Disgust," 229-230.

Keisei says that the corpse must have been a noble monk once and that he (the corpse) led the husband to the Buddhist Way through his virtue. Keisei concludes that it was *en* (karmic bond) between the corpse and the husband that enlightened the husband.

The teaching of *en* has an important role in Japanese Buddhism. Karma (*gō*) and virtue (*toku*) in the previous life are considered to be the cause of everything that happens in this world. *En* also destines all, especially bonds between people.[96] There is a word "*en-domo*" (lit. friend connected with karmic bond) which was often used as a word to express a married couple in the medieval period.[97] However, Keisei praises only the virtue of the noble monk (the corpse) and emphasizes the *en* of a karmic bond between the two. If it is true that it is *en* that seals people's bonds, the husband and wife in the story also got married guided by *en*. It was this belief in *en* that changed the prohibition of male-female relationships in Japanese Buddhism, and it was the Pure Land monks who precipitated this change.

Monks and nuns were prohibited from marriage ever since the beginning of Buddhism in India. At first, they could not even see each other and the emotion that drove people into marriage was thought to be an obstruction to enlightenment. However, Buddhism in medieval Japan offered different teachings from early Indian

Buddhism (also, each sect differed from one another), and most importantly, the belief in *mappō* was strongly emphasized during this period. Shinran tried to simplify

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[96] "*Sode furiau mo tashō no en*" (literary translated as "It is a karmic bond from other life to touch each other's sleeves") is a well known saying in Japan. A similar English saying is "Even a chance acquaintance is preordained." The word "*en*" often appears in Buddhist scriptures and also in its literature in the form of various Buddhist words like *engi* (origins/annals of the origins) and *kechien* (to create karmic ties). Keisei devoted himself to *en* and wrote many *engi* stories of temples.

[97] Katsuura Noriko, "Josei to Kodai shinkō," Joseishisōgōkenkyūkai. ed., *Nihon josei seikatsushi*, vol.1, *Kodai, chūsei* (Tokyo: Tokyodaigakushuppankai, 1990), 102.

the Buddhist teachings in order to save as many people as possible, but he also emphasized that it was natural to violate regulations for monks and nuns since there was no difference between monks and nuns and lay people in the period of *mappō*.[98] This was not a completely new idea, but Shinran actually took a lead in following his own belief by violating the prohibition of marriage.[99]

It is said that what motivated Shinran's revolutionary teaching was a message from Nyoirin Kannon in a dream he had at Rokkakudō.[100] Messages from the Buddha, bodhisattvas, or gods in a dream (*mukoku* 夢告) were considered to be an important means to receive teachings. In Shinran's dream, Nyoirin Kannon said:

> If you the believer, because of the fruition of past karma, are driven to make love to woman, Then I shall take on the body of a beautiful woman to be ravished by you. Throughout your entire life I shall adorn you well, And at death I shall lead you to birth in the paradise.[101]

The above message was written down as a poem in *kanbun*, and it is called *Nyobonge* (Verse on Making Love to a Woman). The remarkable thing in *Nyobonge* is that Shinran had sexual intercourse not with worldly women but with a bodhisattva. Moreover, he was not only permitted to have sex with a woman, but it was also

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[98] Saichō mentioned the same idea in his *Mappō Tōmyōki*. Endo Hajime, "Jūsanseiki ni okeru tsuma to otto no shūkyōkatsudō- Shinran no kekkonsetsuwa 'Bōshuengi no sekai," Okano Haruko ed., *Onna to otoko no jikū*: *Nihon josēshi saikō*. vol.2, *Onna to otoko no tanjō: kodai kara chūsei e* (Tokyo: Fujiwarashoten, 1996), 456.

[99] Shinran had at least three wives and four children. One of his wives, Eshin-ni (1182-1268), was an active nun and traveled with him to propagate the True Pure Land (Jōdo Shinshū) teachings. Letters between her and a daughter, Kakushin-ni (1224-1283) are used as important documents to reveal Shinran's teachings and life.

[100] Rokkakudō was built by Prince Shōtoku and so this teaching of marriage based on Shinran's dream was often connected to the belief of Prince Shōtoku. Endo, "Jūsanseiki ni okeru tsuma to otto no shūkyōkatsudō- Shinran no kekkonsetsuwa 'Bōshuengi no sekai," 446.

[101] James C. Dobbins, *Letters of the Nun Eshinni: Images of Pure Land Buddhism in Medieval Japan* (HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 101.

promised that Nyoirin Kannon would let him be born in the Pure Land. Shinran shared this dream as an important revelation with his followers.

It seems, however, that Shinran had already married before he had the dream. Endō Hajime points out that the dream was salvation for Shinran himself. Actually, there is no mention that every monk and nun can have sex in the revelation. The dream was only for Shinran. It could have shown how he emphasized equality for human beings, but it is more likely he tried to affirm his violation of having sex by propagating the dream. Furthermore, another teaching was combined with *Nyobonge*, that is, the violation of meat eating. The document on meat eating was called *Jōnikumon* (lit. Scripture on the Purity of Meat) and it was written down on the back side of *Nyobonge*.[102] This combination of the desire for sex and food is the same in story 1:19 of *Kankyo no Tomo*. Those – perhaps the two main desires of human beings – were so difficult to overcome that Buddhists struggled to find ways to attain enlightenment or nirvana despite them. Although this affirmation of having sex (with women) was a limited teaching in the True Pure Land sect at that time, it is notable that the *mappō* belief also affected the problem of sex in Buddhism. These problems rose to the surface particularly in the medieval period.

Impurity and Women

The two *fujōkan* stories in *Kankyo no Tomo* (1:19 and 1:20) examined above revealed how the teachings concealed problems about sexual desires in Japanese

[102] *Jōnikumon* is not a particular teaching of Shinran and has its basis in other sutras. It is recorded that Shinran gave a scripture of *Jōnikumon* to a disciple and had him copy *Nyobonge* on the back side of *Jōnikumon*. Endo, 454.

Buddhism. However, these stories are only a small example of the teaching of *fujōkan* and there is a clear distinction from the other two *fujōkan* stories about how they depict objects of impurity. The next story (1:21, the last story of the first volume) is based on Keisei's own childhood experience. He saw the dead body of woman on the riverbank close to Karahashi, widely considered to be in the vicinity of Keisei's childhood home. It was said that the dead woman (apparently nineteen years old) secretly had an affair with the master of the house in which she served. The wife found out about their affair and physically abused the servant woman out of jealousy. The servant woman died as a result and her dead body was thrown away on a riverbank while the husband was away. Keisei depicts the body:

> … it did not look like a human being and appeared to be a piece of a big tree since it did not have either legs or arms. There were no words to express the dirtiness and impurity. Even if we washed it with a large amount of water turning over the big sea, it would be hard to purify it. It was unbearable to watch it.[103]

The depiction of the body – as a piece of a big tree – does not imply that the body had decayed from being left there for so long, but means that the legs and arms were cut off from the body. If the sentence is read without any preconceived idea, it will give an impression of the cruelty of the wife rather than one of the dirtiness and impurity of the victim. However, Keisei emphasizes how impure the body looked. This diversion from a woman's deep jealousy to a woman's impurity is a significant point in unraveling the rhetoric of women's impurity.

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[103] Koizumi Hiroshi, ed. *Hōbutsushū, Kankyo no Tomo, Hirasan kojin reitaku*. Shin Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei 40 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1993), 410.

First, it has to be noted that there was a power relationship among women. As Faure states: "[M]en also dominate other men, women also dominate other women, and social institutions repress both to various degrees."[104] Women possessed their own power hierarchy and some of them, such as Hōjō Masako (1157-1225), even overpowered men.[105] In the "ordinary world," housewives were considered to be the heads of houses because they were in charge of providing food – the most important thing for a family – to its members.[106] Also, the Kamakura government supported the separation of property between wives and husbands and many wives were independent financially from their husbands due to strong bonds between their parents.[107] However, it was men who were supposed to pay taxes even though the truth was that women were providing the money for it. To explore the connection between the hidden and neglected aspects of women and impurity, the history of the belief in impurity in Japan must be explained.

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[104] Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 6-7.

[105] Hōjō Masako was a wife of Minamoto no Yoritomo and controlled the Kamakura shogunate after the death of her son Sanetomo. She became a nun after her husband died and was called *ama shōgun* (nun shogun).

[106] The word *ietōji* 家刀自, which means a housewife, came from the fact that women drank sake, conducted sacred rituals and served visitors by themselves. It can be said that women had power in rituals of each houses. The word *kushi* 櫛, which is an ornament for women's hair, also expresses the fact that women had spiritual power. *Kushi* is originally a tool for magic to possess sacred spirit and a synonym of a skewer (*kushi* 串) which is used in rituals. To put *kushi* 櫛 in the top of one's hair means to have the saving grace of god. However, the word meaning has languished and hair ornaments changed into things which used to distinguish which women belonged to which men, and then, it became just ornaments which had no special meaning. See, Miyata Noboru. *Onna no reiyoku to ie no kami* (Tokyo: Jinbunshoin, 1983).

[107] Iinuma Kenji, "Chūsei zenki no josei no shōgai – jinsein no shodankai no kentō wo tsūjite, Nihon josei seikatsushi vol.2 chūsei, Joseishisōgōkenkyūkai. ed. (Tokyo: Tokyodaigakushuppankai, 1990), 65.

Kegare

The awe toward extraordinariness is the origin of the belief of *kegare*. *Kegare* is a feeling of impurity that one can neither touch nor see. It can be sensed in everyday life regardless of place. Since *kegare* exists everywhere, the concept developed diversely through cultural, religious, and political changes. Yasuda points out that *kegare* was believed to be something that attached to people (or something other than human beings) externally – "*soto naru kegare*" (lit. external impurity)[108]. She notes that the *Kojiki* (712) emphasizes washing bodies with seawater, and that is exactly what Keisei expresses in the story of the dead woman on the riverbank quoted above. However, there is a difference: Keisei wrote that impurity could not be washed away.

Basically, there were three categories of *kegare* and they were also distinguished from each other by colors: black for death (*kurofujō*), white for childbirth (*shirofujō*), and red for blood (*akafujō*).[109] Matsuo points out that this color difference was also seen in monks' robes (*kesa*) so *kegare* affected the robes as well. There were two main colors for monks' robes in the Heian and medieval period: official monks (*kansō*) wore white robes and the Buddhist recluse (*tonseisō*) wore black robes.[110] Matsuo emphasizes the difference between official monks who worked for the court and the government and

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[108] Ibid., 17.

[109] The three categoryes of impurity are: the impurity of death (*shie*), the impurity of childbirth (*san'e*), and the impurity of menstrual blood (*ketsue*).

[110] In early Indian Buddhism, Buddhists' robes were made from old dirty cloth and those are called *funzōe* (lit. clothes for wiping excrement) and the fourfold Vinaya says the color has to be blue, black, or dark red. In Japan, *Sōniryō* added yellow to the three colors but white became the most popular color for Buddhists' robes. Matsuo also points out that white was a color which expressed lay people in ancient accounts and black was a color of the most noble color among color variation of formal clothes for male officers according to their ranks. Matsuo Kenji. *Kamakura shin bukkyō no tanjō*: *kanjin, kegare, hakai no chūsei* (Tokyo: Kôdansha, 1995), 51-53.

Buddhist recluses who chose the freedom of the teachings and propagated Buddhist teachings to ordinary people.[111]

One of the most distinctive differences was that Buddhist recluses dealt with *kegare*, especially the impurity of death. They conducted funerals during their propagation of the Buddhist teachings.[112] Also their chances of exposing themselves to *kegare* increased while they were wandering around to propagate since there were so many people who starved to death in rural areas, especially in the medieval period. In the Heian period, emperors and other imperial members were buried in tombs, but the majority of corpses were just simply discarded after their religious ceremonies. The areas where people left dead bodies such as a place where the servant monk meditated on the dead body in story 1:19 were totally different from the clean cemeteries we would imagine in modern days.[113] This is because people tried not to "touch" impure things as much as possible.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the impurity of death had a significant role during the transition from the Heian period to the Kamakura period. The state government gradually abolished the defense agency (*hyōbushō*) and the police department (*gyōbushō*), which directly dealt with the impurity of death, after conquering the *Emishi* (indigenous people in the northern part of Japan) at the beginning of the

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[111] Most of the famous Buddhist leaders were once Buddhist recluses (*tonseisō*) and some of them were called *kanjinsō*, who devoted themselves to propagation like Gyōki. Ibid., 62-71.

[112] Buddhist funerals became common in the court by the tenth century. Official monks conducted funerals for emperors and other imperial family members, but they started to avoid funerals out of the fear of contamination by the impurity of death and the role shifted to Buddhist recluses completely by the beginning of the fourteenth century. Ibid., 58.

[113] It is said that even Fujiwara no Michinaga, the most influential politician in the Heian period, did not have a tomb and his corpse was thrown away in the mountains. Izawa, *Ten to ten ga sen ni naru: Nihonshi shūchūkōgi*, 78-79.

ninth century. There was no need for war after the conquest and the aristocrats were afraid to be contaminated by the impurity of death. This decline of the force led to the later devastation of the center of Kyoto because farmers who protected their fields and properties by themselves gave rise to warriors.[114] People at the court did not handle crimes or anything relating to death with their own hands, and for that reason – not controlling pollution themselves – they feared *kegare*.[115]

The impurity of death is the core of the belief of *kegare*, and as Ōyama states, "'discrimination' – it took its roots in *kegare* – was started in the city."[116] It is thought that the belief of *kegare* had spread through the court in the ninth century and what deepened it was *Engi-shiki* (Procedures of the Engi Era, 927). This was compiled by the court in order to make clear what people were to avoid throughout a year of Shintō rituals.[117] Ancient accounts such as *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* also contain a belief in *kegare*, but *Engi-shiki* defines *kegare* in great detail, assigning levels for it.

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[114] Izawa explains the devastation of the city by citing a scene at the beginning of *Rashōmon* by Kurosawa Akira. The movie starts with a shot of the front gate of the city (Rashōmon), and shows how serious the government's finances were. He also shows how influential politicians and large Buddhist temples gained power and money by abusing laws. See Izawa, *Ten to ten ga sen ni naru: Nihonshi shūchūkōgi*, 70-106.

[115] This clearly shows that impurity was considered to be infectious even if it was not touched or even seen. This infection was called *shokue* (lit. "touching impurity") and had levels. For example, supposing a family whose family member died has the strongest impurity, a person who visits the family and sits together with them has the second strongest impurity. When the person goes home, his/her family member has the third strongest impurity. Even in modern Japan, people sprinkle salt on their bodies before entering their houses when they come back from Buddhist funerals. This seems to have its basis in the belief of infection of impurity. Momma Sachio, "'Kegare' to suru sarerukoto no gani to sabetsu no chiseigaku," Fukutō Sanae, et al. ed., *Kegare no bunkashi-monogatari, jendā, girei* (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2005), 217.

[116] Quoted in Nishiyama Ryōhei, "Ōchō toshi to 'josei no kegare,'" Joseishisōgōkenkyūkai. ed., *Nihon josei seikatsushi*. vol.1, *Kodai, chūsei* (Tokyo: Tokyodaigakushuppankai, 1990), 181.

[117] This document "reflects the codification of Shinto practice in relation to the unification and bureaucratization of the state but that also records many aspects of Japanese religion long antedating the process of state building." De Bary, *Source of Japanese Tradition from Earliest Times to 1600,* 31.

It defines the impurity of a person's death as continuing for thirty days and animals' impurity for three days. It is remarkable that animals' deaths were also taken into consideration. More importantly, the impurity of birth was written down in the section on the impurity of death, moreover, a human's birth was defined as impure for seven days and an animal's for five days.[118] Birth and death were thought to be equivalent phenomenon in the sense of entering new realms – into and out from this world.[119] This is similar to the Buddhist teaching of reincarnation. Nishiyama states that birth was thought to be an accidental crisis for people, but it was looked upon as a mysterious phenomenon.[120] Yasuda also explains that people considered birth and death as sacred in ancient times, and he supports this by pointing out the meaning of "*imi*/*imu* 忌." The character is used in *Engi-shiki* as 禁忌 (*kinki*), which means "to be taboo," but it has a deeper sense of modesty and restraint and is closer to "awe."[121]

Engi-shiki also defined the impurity of blood. It grouped the impurity of birth and menstruation together, and this created a category of women called *kyūjo* (women who serve the gods).[122] It says if a *kyūjo* is pregnant, she must leave the place where rituals are conducted before preparative ceremonies begin, and if she is in her menstrual period, they have to go to a certain place, like their parents' house.[123] Even though the impurity of pregnancy and menstruation are in the same section in *Engi-shiki*, the two were considered to be different. Another clause in *Engi-shiki* defines the impurity of

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[118] Nishiyama, "Ōchō toshi to josei no kegare," 184.
[119] This is expressed well in a word for child "*akago* 赤子" (lit. red child).
[120] Ibid., 184.
[121] Yasuda, *Kegare kō*, 14.
[122] *Kyūjo* 宮女 basically means a female official who serves at the court. Those women not only served for their masters but also conducted rituals at the court. Nishiyama, "Ōchō toshi to josei no kegare," 184.
[123] Ibid., 184.

childbirth as infectious, but pregnancy is not.[124] The origin of this difference is seen in Japanese myths.

One notable myth is about Toyotama-hime.[125] Toyotama-hime was a daughter of the God of the Sea and married to Hikohohodemi no Mikoto. When she got pregnant, she made a house on the beach. She told her husband not to look at her while she was giving birth to their child in the house. However, Hikohohodemi no Mikoto peeked into the house. Toyotama-hime noticed and went back into the sea out of shame transforming into a dragon. This story has a connection to women's transformative body (this will be explored later), but the important factor is that Toyotama-hime built a house for childbearing. This is considered to be the origin of *ubuya* (a hut/ a house for childbearing). Those houses were used before and after childbearing, but later they were replaced with rooms which were covered with white cloth, which by the eighth century expressed the impurity of childbirth (*shirofujō*).[126] Although the intent of using *ubuya* had a bad connotation, the houses were basically spaces which distinguished the sacredness of childbearing from the ordinary world to obscure the moment of birth.

This is also implied in another myth, a story about Izanami's childbearing.[127] It says that Izanami told Izanagi not to look at her for seven days when she gave birth to Hinokagutsuchi (God of Fire). Izanagi, as well as Hikohohodemi no Mikoto, saw the scene of birth in spite of Izanami's warning and Izanami died because of that.[128] These

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[124] Ibid., 187.

[125] This story is in *Kojiki* and *Nihon-shoki*. The story became the nō play *Unoha* in the later period.

[126] Nishiyama, "Ōchō toshi to josei no kegare," 211.

[127] Izanami is a female god and a wife of Izanagi who is a male god. Together they created Japan in the Japanese myths.

[128] This story has another ending that Izanami died because her female organ was burned when she gave birth to Hinokagutsuchi.

stories are the tragedy that is caused by men's betrayal, but at the same time, they are stories about the extraordinary power of childbearing as it appealed to men.

Japanese myths also give an account of the power of blood. One remarkable story is that various gods were born from the blood that ran from Hinokagutsuchi when Izanagi cut him with a sword.[129] In this story, blood becomes the source of life. There is one view that necessary factors for a human's bodily life and nature such as blood, milk from mothers, and wind were thought to possess magical power and all of them were pronounced "*chi*."[130] Nishiyama also points to the power of blood, citing myths about the use of blood for good crops.[131]

Such myths make it clear that childbirth was originally not supposed to be seen and blood was thought to possess magical power. Childbirth and blood were not impure or bad and menstrual blood was not even mentioned. However, childbirth and blood started to be connected to impurity at the beginning of the ninth century. Nishiyama gives two incidents that affected it: one is an incident of a blood-scattered bedroom at the court and the other is the birth of dogs at court.[132]

The first incident concerns an event in which blood ran (or was scattered) over a bedroom of the eastern palace on the seventeenth of the third month in 806. The cause was unknown, but on exactly the same day, Emperor Kanmu died. On the nineteenth, there were fires in Nishiyama and Kitayama wards in the city and Mount Ōi and Mount Hiei caught fire on the twenty-third. This incident impressed people with the notion that

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[129] Yasuda, *Kegare kō*, 11.
[130] Ibid., 11.
[131] Nishiyama, "Ōchō toshi to josei no kegare," 115-116.
[132] Ibid., 192-204.

blood equalled death. Thus blood came gradually to be thought of as *kegare*. The impurity of blood was not thought to be as strong as other *kegare*, but eventually the impurity of blood shifted to the particular *kegare* of menstrual blood.

The second incident concerns the birth of dogs which was frequently seen at court. One often reads about dogs and cats in court literature. It seems that there was a difference between dogs and cats in the way people treated them. Dogs reproduced so much that people started to hunt them. As noted above, the birth and death of animals were impure like those of human beings, so the impurity of childbirth was increased by the presence of dogs at the court.

One common aspect of the two incidents cited above is that they were unpredictable. The scattered blood incident at court was mysterious and the reproducing of dogs was out of people's control. Under the society's laws, people tried to regulate everything and the outcome was *Engi-shiki*. Importantly, it was also a time when Buddhism was established officially by the state government, and it started to assimilate with Japanese native religions. Buddhism essentially possessed a totally different attitude toward *kegare*: the entire mundane world was the impure land (*edo*). As Buddhism interacted with native religions, it started to incorporate the belief of *kegare* and it secured the concept of women's inferiority.

The Decline of Women's Status in Japanese Buddhism

Many things surrounding women's inferiority happened during the ninth century to the eleventh centuries. Three concepts that supported women's inferiority – the five obstructions, the three obligations, and the transformation of the female sex – were

transmitted to Japan as parts of sutras, and they became prominent in different time periods. The earliest Japanese document which contains the concept of the five obstructions was written in the late ninth century and that of the transformation of the female sex in the middle of tenth century.[133] Although it seems that there was a short time gap between the acceptance of these two teachings in Japan, the two concepts were basically combined because they appear in the Devadatta chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. They were firmly established in the Buddhist teachings in Japan by the end of the ninth century. The number of nuns and nunneries continued to decrease from around the time of the eighth century. Apparently there were some official nuns but in the ninth century their main work was the laundering of monks' robes.[134]

Thus, the ninth century was a difficult century for Buddhist women and can perhaps be called the start of misogyny in Japanese Buddhism. Among those changes, the worst was *nyoninkinsei* (the prohibition of women's entering sacred mountains).[135] This was a belief in *kegare* that was conflated with a Buddhist misogynistic attitude toward women. *Nyoninkinnsei* was that women were prohibited from entering sacred mountains as a measure to prevent monks' sexual desires.[136] This was later replaced with a theory that women were impure so they had to refrain from entering mountains in order not to "pollute" sacred mountains, and women were therefore defined as impure

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[133] Nishiyama, "Ōchō toshi to josei no kegare," 79.

[134] Taira Masayuki, "Chūseibukkyō to josei," Joseishisōgōkenkyūkai. ed., *Nihon josei seikatsushi*. vol.2,*Chūsei* (Tokyo: Tokyodaigakushuppankai, 1990,) 80.

[135] It was eleventh century when *nyoninkekkai* was seen clearly, but it is considered to be started in the ninth century. Ibid., 80.

[136] Great leaders such as Hōnen and Mokuren, however, clearly stated that there was no such teaching about the impurity of menstruation or of women themselves. Īnuma, "Chusei zenki no josei no shi – Jinsei no shodankai no kentō wo tsūjite," Joseishisōgōkenkyūkai. ed., *Nihon josei seikatsushi*. vol.2,*Chūsei* (Tokyo: Tokyodaigakushuppankai, 1990), 40.

beings.

As noted repeatedly, it is not only the Buddhist teachings but a mixture of various factors that caused women's inferiority. One of the significant factors is the change in the system of marriage. There were two types of marriage during the Heian period to the medieval period: one is *tsumadoi-kon* in which a husband visits his wife at her home and the other is *mukotori-kon* in which a wife's family takes a husband in marriage. In the case of *tsumadoi-kon*, it was not necessary for married couples to live in the same place and the males could have more than one wife, while males had only one wife and became a member of the wife's family in *mukotori-kon*. In those types of marriage, the parents' power was the key and the family structure was parent-oriented. However, a new type of marriage system appeared at the beginning of the Kamakura period, known as *yometori-kon* (lit. to take female in marriage). *Yometori-kon* was the opposite of *mukotori-kon* and it was based on the principle of "one wife for one husband." This change in marriage type is the establishment of "*ie*" and the patriarchal ideology which ruled the family structure.

This change in the marriage system affected people's ideas as well. One remarkable change was the Confucian ideology of chastity that became mixed up with the Buddhist teaching of *en*. Confucianism denied remarriage and encouraged the idea of *kairaidōketsu*, which means "to get old in this life and be buried in the same grave when dead." Ancient Japanese society did not have such an idea; it was common to remarry.[137] Married couples were considered to be connected by a karmic bond (a

[137] Katsuura Noriko, "Josei to kodai shinkō," Jinsei no shodankai no kentō wo tsūjite," Joseishisōgōkenkyūkai. ed., *Nihon josei seikatsushi*. vol.1, Kodai c*hūsei* (Tokyo: Tokyodaigakushuppankai, 1990), 102.

married couple was called *endomo* meaning "friends connected with karmic bond"). That teaching developed through the influence of *kairaidōketsu* and married people began to pray or practice in order to seal relationships with their husbands or wives.

The concept of the three obligations, which was influenced by Confucianism in China, is considered to be combined with the five obstacles at the end of the eleventh century. They encouraged women to renounce the world after their husbands' death in order to pray for their peaceful rebirth. The first story of the second volume of *Kankyo no Tomo* depicts a woman who embodies the "ideal woman."

The story is about a nun who lived in the mountains of Tsu Province. One day a man encountered the nun and asked why she lived there. She said that her husband died when she was quite young so she took the tonsure and entered the mountain on the day when all memorial services for her husband had ended. When she renounced the world, she discarded her children and also abandoned a large estate which she possessed because she thought "all these are merely companions of one's dream."[138]

Keisei mentions the idea of *kairaidōketsu* in this story, but he says that the belief is an awful idea. He explains the reason by citing phrases from poems: "if he were born in the skies, he would like to be a bird who would fly in unison with his female partner"[139] and "if it be a wild field, then I shall be a quail calling plaintively."[140] These express how people wished to seal their relationships with their loves both in this world and in the next life, but Keisei interprets those phrases as opposing the Buddhist teachings. What he uses to support his thought was the Buddhist teaching of *rokudō*

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[138] Panday, "Women, Sexulaity, and Enlightenment," 335.
[139] The source is a poem (*chōgonka*) by Po Chū-i. Ibid., 335.
[140] This phrase is from a poem which appears in Ise monogatari. Ibid., 335.

(six courses). The teaching is that there are six hierarchical realms – the realms of gods, humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and creatures of hell – and every living creature is reborn up and down within those realms according to karmic reward or retribution for their acts.[141] Keisei states that the composers of the poems hoped to be reborn as animals. Despite the fact that people have to perform Buddhist practices to be reborn in a higher realm in Buddhism, the authors of cited poems wished to be reborn in the third lowest realm.

Keisei's point shows his sincere devotion to Buddhism and also his knowledge of literature, but there is no implication that he tried to save women from Confucian ideology. The story about the nun in the mountain ends like this:

> Using the place name Ura no Hamayū, a person reproached a lover with the words, 'My resentment will pile up.' Then again there was the case of the person who compared his life with the ephemeral dew and said that he would gladly exchange it for one meeting with his lover. The bond that tied these lovers must have been truly hard to bear. These relationships are at once pitiable and shamelessly mindful of the Buddha's Dharma.[142]

This story reveals the relatively high position of women in the family because women could inherit property (in this story, estates). Kesei's opinion shifts to the relationship between men and women toward the end of the story. He ultimately accuses people in love of not being religious. Keisei emphasizes that the nun in the story was good since she chose to live as a recluse, even though he thought women were inherently bad. He writes:

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[141] For more details, see Wililam R. Lafleur, "In and out of the Rokudō: Kyōkai and the Formation of Medieval Japan," *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan* (CA: University of California Press, 1983), 26-59.

[142] *Hamayū* 浜木綿 is a pivot word (*kakekotoba*) for 'piling up.' Panday, "Women, Sexuality, and Enlightenment," 337.

> A woman's nature is such that whether of high rank or low birth, she pins her hopes on all sorts of things, but in the end is unable to realize her expectations. The depth of this lady's heart that made her decide to receive the tonsure was, by contrast, truly profound.[143]

Even though he is against the Confucian idea of *kairaidōketsu*, he still supports its negative image of women.

He also makes a remarkable statement about the nun's appearance in the first part of this story. He describes the nun this way: "The nun had a pale complexion and her appearance had declined to such an extent that it would be impossible to know whether she was good-looking or ugly."[144] This sentence follows the first paragraph of this story which tells how careful the nun was about her culinary regimen.[145] It can be said that her poor appearance emphasizes how she strictly followed the Buddhist teachings. This change in the appearance of women is one significant aspect which caused the decline of women's status, incorporating the belief in *kegare*.

Woman's Transformable Body

In Buddhism, as one of the three concepts of women's inferiority, the transformation of the female sex clearly shows that women can become enlightened. But the truth is women *must* transform. Devadatta chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* tells us

[143] Ibid., 335.
[144] Ibid., 335.
[145] It says the nun stopped eating five cereals and prepared meals with yew nuts which she stored.

that the dragon girl's transformation into a man is a great attainment, but included within this story is the discriminatory supposition that women cannot attain enlightenment. However, another aspect comes out when we see women's transformations in native myths. As briefly mentioned in the section on *kegare*, Toyotama-hime could transform her appearance. In a nō play about her story entitled *Unoha*, phrases from the Devadatta chapter are cited and her transformation is linked to the concept of the transformation of the female sex.[146]

It is not clear whether Toyotama-hime's transformation was a human or a dragon in appearance. There are, however, many stories in which women transform into snakes, which are dragon-like in appearence. The most famous story is *Dōjōji*.[147] In this story, a woman falls in love with a traveling monk and asks him to marry her. The monk lies to her, saying he will come back to marry her after finishing his pilgrimage. Realizing that he has lied, she chases him transforming into a big snake. The monk hides inside of a big bell at Dōjōji, but the snake finds out that he is there and coils around the bell. The bell becomes terribly hot and the monk dies from the heat. A woman's jealousy is the source of the transformation.

There is a story based in folklore which may be a basis of this tale about women's transformation; Keisei recorded it. The story is *Akoya-denshō* (The Tradition of Akoya). There was a diligent Buddhist disciple at a temple in Yoshino. Although the disciple passed a test, his master let another disciple be ordained.[148] The disciple who had a grudge against his master threw himself into a valley. However, he did not die

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[146] The dates of this play are uncertain, but it was probably written in the Muromachi period.
[147] This story also became a nō play.
[148] There were some kinds of paper tests for monks to become fully ordained official monks.

and was transformed into a dragon. The dragon tried to kill the master, but a bodhisattva who noticed this destroyed the valley and rocks crushed the dragon.[149] This story is considered to be a basis of all *chigo monogatari*, but Abe points out that the word "*ako*" was used as a nickname for women and explains that *chigo* and women transformed when their grudge exceeded their limits because of betrayal.[150] Thus their transformation began to be expressed as a negative one.

In story 2:3 in *Kankyo no Tomo*, a woman transforms into a demon because of a grudge held against her lover. In this story the daughter of a certain person fell in love with a man, but he visited her less and less. She stopped eating and hid herself in her room once he stopped visiting her. One day she tied her hair up into five knots, just like the horns of a demon, using millet jelly. Wearing red *hakama* (Japanese trousers), she left home. Years later, it was rumored that there was a demon in a ruined temple in a remote field in the vicinity of the woman's house. It was also said that the demon had been catching young boys and eating them. People in the region decided to burn down the temple, and when the temple was half burned, a demon-like creature came out of the temple. When people tried to kill the demon, it started to tell a story about her regrets toward her lover, who drove her to become like this and who she killed. She also explained that her appearance would not return to its original state no matter how she tried. She ate children, she said, out of extreme hunger. After finishing her story, the woman asked the villagers to perform a religious service for her and told the villagers not to do what she did. In the end she jumped into the burning temple.

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[149] Abe Yasurō, "'Seinaru mono' to josei – toran'ni denshō no shinsō," Okano Haruko ed., *Onna to otoko no jikū*: *Nihon josēshi saikō*. vol.2, *Onna to otoko no tanjō: kodai kara chūsei e* (Tokyo: Fujiwarashoten, 1996), 40.

A demon (*oni*) is a creature in Buddhist hells and, needless to say, the worst thing one can become. Although dragons and snakes are often depicted as sacred creatures, the transformation into demons only expresses a conversion to evil. Keisei states: "Her life in the next world will by no means be a good one. I do not believe that the person who related this story to me specified whether or not a memorial service was held for her."[151] Keisei completely denies her happiness in the next life.

There is another story 2:9 in *Kankyo no Tomo* dealing with a woman's transformation. There was a high-ranking priest who fell in love with a lady-in-waiting of royal birth. The woman hesitated to see him at first but eventually invited him to her home. She told him that she had invited him to show him how her body was impure since he was a person on the Buddhist path. She describes herself:

> This body of mine is an indescribably smelly and foul object. The inside of my head is filled to overflowing with gray matter. Inside the skin, bones and flesh are coiled together. Blood and pus flow through the whole body, and there is not a single thing in the body that one would want to get close to.[152]

When she actually appeared in front of him:

> Her hair was standing up, extremely disheveled like that of a demon. Her face, once so refined, was blue in some places and yellow in others. Her legs had lost their former color and were filthy. Her robes were covered here and there with blood, and she smelled unbearably repulsive.[153]

Seeing the woman's impure body, the priest cried, saying "I have indeed met a true friend who has guided me to reform myself" and he left.[154]

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[150] Ibid., 42-43.
[151] Panday, "Women, Sexuality, and Enlightenment," 340.
[152] Ibid., 349.
[153] Ibid., 349.
[154] Ibid., 350

Keisei praises this woman as a lady with "a splendid and wise heart."[155] It is one of the religious practices that the lady abandoned the luxuriousness of life. However, it was approved only when the priest had realized the true meaning. The lady herself did not attain enlightenment and she was only depicted as a patriarchal type of "good woman" who supported a man. The embodiment of impurity was not the salvation of the lady and she remained a woman waiting.

[155] Ibid., 350.

CONCLUSION

Discrimination against women was deeply connected to the problem of sexual desires in Buddhism, a belief in impurity, and the decline of women's status in Japanese society. The Buddha's rejection of women at the establishment of his sangha was based on his consideration to help his male followers to attain their religious goals. His emphasis on the importance of detachment from sexual desires was, however, developed into teachings that women could not attain enlightenment as men could.

To the contrary, however, women played important roles at the beginning of the development of Buddhism in Japan. At this time there were also many influential women in politics and the Japanese native religions respected women's power. However, Buddhism, which developed through many different cultures, did not take root in Japanese culture as it was and Japanese Buddhism formed its own particular characteristics. The most important factor was the assimilation of Buddhism and native religion, Shinto. Through the assimilation, the native Japanese belief of *kegare* changed into the teachings that defined women as impure. Gods in Shinto were believed to hate *kegare*, which was originally death, however, birth and blood also became taboo. Gradually those three elements of *kegare* were connected to women who could give birth and menstruated through their childbearing years. Thus the negative image of women's reproductive ability was created in religion and it started to affect women themselves. At the same time, during the ninth to the twelfth centuries, women's status in society kept declining because of the influence of continental cultures and ideologies such as patriarchy. Japanese Buddhism assimilated those changes and recreated the inferiority of women in its teachings.

The beginning of the medieval period, when Keisei wrote *Kankyo no Tomo*, was a time when various teachings against women were integrated and also Japanese Buddhism developed teachings about sexual desires. His work reflects those changes and the *fujōkan* stories express them clearly. It is women who embody *kegare* but it is men who attain enlightenment through contemplating on it. However, contemplation did not lead men to enlightenment directly, but it helped contain their detachment from their sexual desire. Women were evil because they drove men's sexual desire, but at the same time, they were also a medium for enlightenment.

It seems that Keisei intended to soften the tone of his work out of his consideration for a young court lady to whom he dedicated this work. However, in stories dealing with impurity, he emphasizes that the ideal status of a woman is being subordinate to a man. *Kankyo no Tomo* would help a female reader as religious guidance, but at the same time, it would have trapped the woman in a predicament similar to women in its stories.

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