

RE-PRESENTING THE *CHIGO*: THE FIGURE OF THE ACOLYTE IN MEDIEVAL  
JAPANESE BUDDHIST LITERATURE

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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In medieval Japan, the figure of the Buddhist acolyte or *chigo* became the subject of an entire subgenre of literature, the *chigo monogatari* or acolyte tale. The study of these tales has tended to focus on them as windows into the socio-historical experience of the *chigo*. While such analyses have been important, they have also tended to overlook the symbolic and literary significance of the stories on their own terms. The goal of this project is to offer a reconsideration of these tales with special emphasis on their narrative, literary, and symbolic value, as well as the Buddhist motifs and discourses that animate them.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In Japanese culture, the figure of the Buddhist acolyte, or *chigo* (稚児), has been a popular object of artistic depiction, both in image and in text. In fact, during the medieval period, and especially the twelfth to the thirteen centuries, the figure of the *chigo* inspired an entire sub-genre of literature, known as the *chigo monogatari* (or acolyte tales)<sup>1</sup>. These tales often depict romantic and sexual relationships between young acolytes and monks, and also valorize the acolyte as a potent spiritual being, somewhere between deity and human child. Iconographic representations are often included in *chigo monogatari*, and such representations are also often found in painted hand scrolls depicting and discussing public gatherings at Buddhist temples. The goal of this project is to offer readings of these stories on their own terms, freeing their reception from normative scholarly interpretations that has so far narrowed their significance to how they serve as indexes to socio-historical “reality.”

Much of the scholarship on the both the stories and the images of the *chigo* has focused on understanding how the *chigo monogatari* are reflective of the social, religious, and historical experience of the *chigo*. While such efforts have done much to shed light on the possible ways historical *chigo* themselves may have been perceived, they also tend to conflate the *chigo* as a historical figure with the *chigo* as they are represented and idealized within the *chigo monogatari* tradition. More specifically, the bulk of scholarship has focused on how *chigo monogatari* handle the romantic and sexual

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<sup>1</sup> The focus of this project will be on these tales, written in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. These tales are distinguished from other literary examples in which the *chigo* trope is utilized. I will discuss their categorization more significantly in the first chapter.

relationships between monks and acolytes, and have thus tended to view the tales as attempts at legitimizing such relationships, mobilizing Buddhist rhetoric in the service of sexual exploitation. At issue is both the uneven power relationship between the monk as master and the *chigo* as disciple, as well as the intergenerational nature of the sexual relationships between the *chigo*, who were boys from the ages of 12 to 17 years of age, and adult monks.

Literary representations may indeed shed light on the ideological and discursive conditions of knowledge that are utilized in the construction of idealized images of figures such as the *chigo*, that is, they might give us a sense of a Foucauldian *épistémè*, or the historically bound parameters of ideology<sup>2</sup>. To this end, it is certainly possible, and arguably necessary, to regard the *chigo monogatari* as sources for understanding the attitudes of Buddhism as it regraded male-male sexuality within the larger scope of the Medieval Japanese *épistémè*. On the other hand, Foucault's conception of the *épistémè*, which first appeared in *The Order of Things*, would later be modified to acknowledge the co-existence of multiple epistemic boundaries operating at any given time. Therefore, one as of yet under-researched area regarding the *chigo monogatari* remains the investigation of discourses *other than* Buddhist sexual rhetoric that may have created the social conditions for possibility for the representation of *chigo*. To pose the problem as a question, what other epistemic discourses undergird and situate the meaning of the *chigo monogatari*? If they are capable of signifying meanings associated with sexuality, as well as related and overlapping areas of knowledge, such as the histories external to the text including *chigo's* subjugation to his adult master, what *other* discursive conditions of

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<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1971.

identity, meaning, and figural significance can the tales also elucidate?

Another related issue is how to regard the figure of the *chigo* himself. There remains a tension between understanding the *chigo* within the *chigo monogatari*, on the one hand, as a literary trope whose figurative or representational value is important in its own right, and on the other, of taking the *chigo* as a source of positivistic historical knowledge. So far, scholarly interpretations have largely regarded the figure of the *chigo* based on the latter perspective, largely delimiting the field of knowledge that the tales are understood to produce to historical reality. In this way, the meaning and significance of the *chigo* who appears upon the pages of *chigo monogatari* can be said to be as much a product of historians and their historiography as of history proper. To this end, it is crucial to illustrate how and in what ways the figure of the *chigo*, or more precisely, the *meaning* of this figure, has come to be delimited, constructed, and codified in scholarship. Therefore, a revaluation of *chigo monogatari* that regards the *chigo* as a literary trope as well as historical “reality” can broaden the range of meanings that the tales are understood to signify, while nevertheless, remaining attentive to the historical contingency of the production of such meanings. There is a two-way operation to be examined here: On the one hand, one needs to attend to the very real sexual exploitation of *chigo*; on the other, one must not forget that the attempt to recover the “real” history is a kind of scholarly construction itself, that may obscure both the fact of this construction as well as the significance of literary tropes that in themselves helped to define and shape historical materiality. In this sense, symbolic meaning can occlude historical understanding, but the search for “historical understanding” can also obscure the ways in which symbolic meaning helped to shape “historical realities.”

The work of Hayden White might be one way to approach the problem. For White, historiographical analysis always contains a degree of interpretation that searches out the figurative meaning of historical "reality," and is therefore already narrativized. Positing history as an objective representation of reality is therefore only possible by ignoring the extent to which history is narratively constructed. For White downplaying the figurative significance of historical events in favor of positivistic description is not only largely impossible, but also, misses the point. "Real" historical events can simply be regarded as such, but the historian must fulfill the demand to describe what it all means, and therefore ought to embrace the narrative nature of historical description. Historical writing is thus one arena in which narrative must be taken seriously, contrary to the typical standpoint of the historian that literary expression is purely fictional and holds no real historical value. As White puts it: "Historiography is an especially good ground on which to consider the nature of narration and narrativity because it is here that our desire for the imaginary, the possible, must contest with the imperatives of the real, the actual"<sup>3</sup>. That historiography or historical writing becomes a site in which the tension between the "desire for the imaginary" and the "imperatives of the real" come to a head thus requires us to take narrativity seriously in our understanding of how historical knowledge is produced, spoken of, and written about.

Another alternative model for reading the *chigo monogatari* in a way that does not subordinate their capacity to be meaningful to positivistic history, is Keller Kimbrough's understanding of various medieval literatures as "Vernacular Buddhism." In his analysis of the shifting literary significance and meaning of the figure of the

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<sup>3</sup> Hayden V. White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, p.4.

historical Izumi Shikibu throughout the Heian to Muromachi periods, Kimbrough shows how Buddhist sermons incorporated her image. For Kimbrough, the significance of such an incorporation is to be found in both understanding how the image of Izumi Shikibu was utilized as a way of disseminating Buddhist values, but also, how the symbolic meaning of Shikibu cannot be separated from Buddhist motifs. More generally, "Much of medieval Japanese literature including *setsuwa* (tale literature), *otogizoshi* (short medieval fiction), *Jish engi* (temple and shrine histories), *gunk mono* (martial tales), and some narrative painting... has its roots in story-telling, proselytizing, and fund-raising activities of an array of Heian and Kamakura-period preacher-entertainers"<sup>4</sup>. While the utilization of *chigo monogatari* in sermonic contexts is not attested in historical records, we can still emphasize as Kimbrough does elsewhere, that such vernacular accounts which have tended to be ignored because of their "obvious fictitiousness," can nevertheless be regarded as implying "a kind of storehouse of Buddhist concepts, figures, and images available for use to wide variety of authors, artists, and performers across the centuries"<sup>5</sup>. To this degree we might also emphasize the efficacy of such vernacular formulations of Buddhist "concepts, figures, and images" to meaningfully signify values that are no less significant than historical realities external to the pages of *chigo monogatari*.

The focus of the present project is thus to suggest other possible ideological and strategic apparatuses that were utilized in the process of representing the *chigo*. While such ideological parameters are themselves historically contingent, I do not wish to

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<sup>4</sup> R K Kimbrough, *Preachers, Poets, Women, and the Way: Izumi Shikibu and the Buddhist Literature of Medieval Japan*, Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2008, p.4.

<sup>5</sup> Glassman, H, and K Kimbrough. "Editors' Introduction: Vernacular Buddhism and Medieval Japanese Literature." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 36.2 (2009): p.204.

suggest that understanding them can shed light on how the *chigo* actually *lived*. I instead wish to focus on the history of discourses that may have been incorporated into the tales as a means of understanding how the *chigo* are actually *represented*.

With that said there has been an increasing flow of publications in the past decade that illuminate the historical experience of *chigo*. In particular the work of Tsuchiya Megumi and Hosokawa Ryoichi have been especially influential. Both utilize documents other than the *chigo monogatari* to describe the lived experience of historical *chigo*. Before proceeding to a summary of the pages to follow, I hope to outline their work in order to give a sense of who the *chigo* were. This will help us to keep in mind the interrelation, but also the differences between historical experience and histories of representation which are not always true to life on the ground.

### ***The Historical Chigo***

Both the works of Tsuchiya and Hosokawa have been utilized by some of the more recent scholarly works on *chigo* and *chigo monogatari* in Western language, most notably, the works of Paul Atkins and Bernard Faure. Their unique use of sources other than *chigo monogatari*, such as temple records, images of public festivals, and legal documents give us a sense of the *chigo* as a non-idealized figure, and to this end, reveal the extent to which the represented *chigo* of the *chigo monogatari* are heavily idealized and mythologized figures.

Tsuchiya's chapters on *chigo* in her work, *Chūsei Jiin No Shakai to Geinō* (中世寺院の社会と芸能), focus on understanding the *chigo's* materially (*gutaiteki* 具体的) contingent experience<sup>6</sup>. What is perhaps most innovative about her work is her

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<sup>6</sup> Tsuchiya Megumi, *Chūsei Jiin No Shakai to Geinō*, Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2001.

distinction between the *chigo's* private and public functions. In order to understand how the acolyte was regarded privately, or rather, within the internal logic of the Buddhist monastery, she looks to temple records, and to understand his public reception, she looks to art historical depictions of *chigo* during public gatherings.

In examining the records of temples such as Ninnaji, Tsuchiya argues that not all children in the Medieval Buddhist monastery were considered *chigo*, nor were they evenly valued. To the contrary, she identifies at least four discrete categories used to describe children in the confines of monastic life, which also appear in hierarchal order with *kindachi* (公達) at the top, then *chigo*, followed by *chudouji* (中童子), and lastly the *daidouji* (大童子). Three of these categorizations, excluding *kindachi*, had previously been thought to describe the ages of the children, with *chigo* being the youngest and *daidouji* being the oldest. Tsuchiya suggests otherwise, arguing that these categorizations corresponded to the social rank of the families to which the children belonged, with the children of noble families at the top, followed by children of families tied to Buddhist monasteries such as temple administrators, the children of temple laborers, and at the bottom, the children of samurai and lower ranking temple workers. It was not only status or rank that these categories denoted, but also the kinds of work that were expected of the children in day-to-day monastic life. According to temple records, the *chigo's* official work consisted of studying, sometimes to become a monk while the *chudouji* served within the monastery as a servant and often a food server, and the *daidouji* had a variety of tasks, most of which involved outdoor maintenance. As the stay of *kindachi* in monasteries was temporary, there is no record of what kinds of work they



were expected to do, but it is likely that unlike the lower ranks, they did not have to directly serve monks.

We see a slightly modified hierarchy in the records concerning public festivals, with the bottom ranks unchanged, and the top rank now called *joudou* (上童), a category that encompassed the *chigo*. The *kindachi* appear to drop out of the picture. Because the children were seen by the public during these festivals, they were able to be pictorialized, providing a further source of knowledge. Here we see that the children were also required to work during the festivals, with the jobs appearing to correspond to rank. In addition to their activities during the festivals, the children are also distinguishable by attire. The *jodo* were placed on a central stage, and danced the *waramae* (童舞え). They are depicted dressed in lavish kimono of many colors, with their long hair in braids, and wore cosmetics. The *chudouji* appear in similar dress, but they are distinguishable by their roles as banner bearers, positioned by the foot of the stage.

The *daidouji* appear in unadorned white kimonos, and can be seen on the margins of the festivals, tending to the oxen that pulled the carriages in which the guests had arrived, or otherwise tending to outdoor maintenance during the event. Often the *daidouji* appear to be either adults, or at least older than the other children, contributing to the previous understanding that the ranks denoted age. Tsuchiya argues, however, that as the children of lower ranking families, the reason why they were so often depicted as adults is because their function and role did not change even as they aged, especially given that their lower rank prevented them from taking on priestly activities and duties. She thus also argues against theories that the *daidouji* were presented as children because monks desired to keep them "divine" as children often were thought to be. A frequent

paradox in the *chigo monogatari* is how the *chigo* is often revealed to be an avatar of the Bodhisattva Kannon, in one sense sacralizing him, and in another, dehumanizing him to the extent that the possible sexual violence committed against him is retroactively validated through the enlightenment that the *chigo*/Kannon brings upon the monk<sup>7</sup>. Tsuchiya shows that the dehumanization of the *daidouji* in particular did not only appear on this abstract and doctrinal level, but was a social reality.

Tsuchiya thus has shed light on the historical roles of *chigo*, and how these roles structured their experiences. In particular she shows that the children within the walls of monasteries came from a broad spectrum of social classes, which in turn structured their day-to-day lives. Outside of the *kindachi*, Tsuchiya also argues that the children were beholden to their masters, obeying them without resistance, but in turn gained a special favor from monks resulting in certain privileges, especially at the higher ranks, that were not afforded to others such as the *daidouji*. Hosokawa's work on *chigo* in his book, *Itsudatsu no Nihon Chusei* (逸脱の日本中世) also focuses on how the class to which children belonged influenced their experience, but focuses in addition on how such status affected the treatment of *chigo* by their superiors<sup>8</sup>. Reading Hosokawa's work with respect to Tsuchiya's also allows us to see how the ranking system she describes corresponded directly to treatment.

Drawing from the monk Jinson's diary, Hosokawa shows how two children bequeathed to him were given drastically differing treatment. The first child, Aichiyomaru, was the son of a temple official of Daijoin, and therefore could be

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<sup>7</sup> See for example, Atkins, Paul S. "Chigo in the Medieval Japanese Imagination." *The Journal of Asian Studies*. 67.3 (2008): 947-970.

<sup>8</sup> Ryōichi Hosokawa, *Itsudatsu No Nihon Chūsei: Kyōki. Tōsaku, Ma No Sekai*, Tōkyō: JICC Shuppanyoku, 1993.

characterized according to Tsuchiya's system as a *chigo*. The second child, Aimitsumarū, came from a family who worked as servants for a branch temple of Kofukuji, falling into the category of *daidouji*. The paths that these children's lives eventually took also confirm these categorizations.

Aichiyomaru eventually left Jinson's care and took a post as an estate manager in Sakai, where he killed himself at the age of 37. Aimitsumarū on the other hand, killed himself while still in Jinson's care at the age of 28. Hosokawa argues that while Aichiyomaru's suicide remains a mystery, Aimitsumarū's death is likely tied directly to his relationship with Jinson. Aimitsumarū came into Jinson's care at the relatively old age of 21, and while he took the tonsure at age 26, because of his social status, could never himself become a monk. Thus he continued to serve Jinson in the manner of a *chigo* or *daidouji*, while Aichiyomaru was able to move on and acquire a position of relative power relating to priestly duties. Additionally, while it is possible that Jinson had a sexual relationship with both children, he only confirms a relationship with the lower ranking Aimitsumarū. If we again think back to Tsuchiya, this could also suggest that sexual relationships with acolytes were only permissible with the children of lower ranks.

What we might derive from these differing fates, and as Hosokawa himself suggests, is the degree to which the rank and social status of temple children mediated the manner in which a monk could conduct himself with respect to temple children. This further cements Tsuchiya's point that the dehumanization of temple children, cloaked in the myth of children's divine status, is in fact a product of temple hierarchies mimicking the hierarchies of the social and historical world. Hosokawa concludes, in line with Tsuchiya, that Aimitsumarū's fate differs from Aichiyomaru's because of his lower

status, but also makes the important additional point that Jinson himself was from a noble family, thereby also introducing an uneven power dynamic between himself and Aimistumaru, that compounds the problem of power disparity owing to their age difference and differing monastic ranks. Hosokawa is however, also careful to note that some privileges and special treatment within monastic life were afforded to temple children, even those of lower ranking families like Aimitsumaru, and it is thus important to remember how such treatment also structured the acolyte's historical experience.

### ***Chapter Summaries***

Hosokawa and Tsuchiya's works as described above are crucial for reminding us that heavily idealized and mythologized figures like the *chigo* had their historical counterparts, some of whom suffered from abuse and dehumanization on the grounds of social status. Careful consideration of the historical *chigo* provided by the Hosokawa and Tsuchiya, help to disclose some of the abuses. At the same time, what Hosokawa and Tsuchiya also demonstrate is the degree to which there was no singular figure called the *chigo*, but rather multiple categories of temple children, occupying diverse social narrative topoi. The idealized inscription of the *chigo* within the stories themselves is similarly dynamic and polysemic. While the category of *chigo* cannot give us an exhaustive understanding of the lived experiences of the many different kinds of temple children Tsuchiya in particular describes, neither can the meaning of the tales in which such children came to be depicted be reduced to a singular rubric.

In the second chapter I will describe the trajectory of scholarship surrounding the *chigo monogatari* tradition. In particular, I hope to show that in differing moments, the stories were reduced to a singular meaning. First, in the 1950's the meanings of the tales

were seen to be exhausted by their depictions of male-male love, then in the 1980's, scholars sought to delineate their religious import, and finally in the 1990's onwards, the tales have been read for the ways in which Buddhist rhetoric is utilized to conceal the histories of sexual abuse that befell *chigo*. Through each interpretive lens, the tales are read ultimately for how they were deployed by the presumed Buddhist authors and for how they reflect social and historical reality. Instead I suggest that while such attempts have had their place, it is also time for the tales to be read at the level of their representational tendencies, through which new ways of reading the tales become possible. The following chapters will attempt to challenge these normalized readings presented in chapter one.

In the third chapter, I take up one of these possible routes by illustrating how the *chigo monogatari* not only contain traces of Buddhist sexual rhetoric, but also contain discourses on gender and biological sex which overlap with ideologies of sexuality. My aim in the chapter is to show that the scholarly emphasis on the tales' depictions of homosexuality is based largely on Western models of sexuality and sexual identity, and in this sense, have failed to appreciate the systems of sexuality presented in the tales, especially as they overlay gender expectations. To this end I give an outline of the doctrinal history of androcentric Buddhist discourses in Japan. I compare the presence of such discourses of sexuality, gender, and sexualized bodies within the story *Chigo Imamairi* to similar tendencies in the Heian court tale, *Torikaebaya monogatari*, in order to suggest that such perceptions were not exclusive to Buddhist monasteries. To this degree I hope to show the presence of certain problematic ideologies within the tales to suggest that the texts contain issues of oppressive discourse that go beyond the problem

of intergenerational, coercive sexual relationships, and also, on the same token, suggest that the category of homosexuality is an incomplete one for exhausting the narratives of unconventional sexual politics.

Finally, in the fourth chapter I focus on the tales as representations of a particular kind of childhood, both in terms of chronological age, but also in terms of specific cultural expectations of childhood that go beyond youth to describe children. I focus on two persistent Buddhist constructions of childhood, the adaptation of filial piety to Buddhist needs, through which the *chigo* can be understood as an object of love more akin to a son than a lover, as well as the prevalent tendency shared by many of these tales to depict the liminal nature of childhood in which, as we have discussed above, children appear in the ambiguous balance between the sacred and the subhuman. I argue that in such formulations, it is in fact the *chigo* who holds the balance of power in his relationship with a monk. To this degree the significance of the *chigo* as a child-like figure upon the page, contests the value placed upon the *chigo* as a figure whose historical actuality is thought to supersede the text. To show how this inversion of power becomes possible, I offer a close reading of the *Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari*, perhaps the most well know of all *chigo* tales, and also the most celebrated depiction of the *chigo* proximity to bodhisattvas.

Ultimately, I hope to show new possible pathways for reading, which may illuminate for us the variety of insights that these tales contain. I do not wish to undermine previous modes of reading, nor to show them as outmoded, but only to suggest that homosexuality, religious import, and social realities of sexual abuse are only three among many possible interpretations. Childhoods and gender dynamics also do not

exhaust the possible discursive tendencies and ideological norms that structured the representation of the fictional *chigo* in these texts, but opening the way for reading the tales in these ways shows us that the *chigo* on the page was as dynamic and alive as Tsuchiya and Hosokawa's historical *chigo* in the monastery .

## CHAPTER II

### SCHOLARLY CONSTRUCTIONS OF *CHIGO MONOGATARI*

So far, the Western language study of *chigo monogatari* (稚児物語), or acolyte tale, has overwhelmingly focused on the theme of *nanshoku* (male-male love) that is heavily featured in the majority of these stories. While it would certainly be mistaken to disregard these texts as sources of knowledge regarding medieval monastic practices of *nanshoku*, and their cultural reception more broadly, *nanshoku* is not the *only* salient motif, theme, or object of consideration present in the text. More specifically, and for the purposes and scope of this analysis, I am concerned with the many possible embedded subject standpoints that the term *chigo* (acolyte) might signify within the ideological system of the *chigo monogatari* tradition *in addition* to his involvement in male-male sexual practices. Some of these standpoints might include the intertwining of the *chigo's* identity with femininity and corresponding issues of androcentric Buddhist discourses (Chapter 3), or the *chigo's* life as a particular construction of childhood, as well Buddhist views of the family, including Buddhist instantiations of filial piety and the parent/child relationship more broadly (Chapter 4).

Before suggesting how we might read these texts for themes that extend beyond *nanshoku*, I will focus in this chapter on the trajectory of secondary literatures in English and Japanese in order to frame the present state of scholarship concerning *chigo monogatari*. I am primarily concerned with the ways in which current scholarly consensus seems to indicate that these stories should be understood as sites in which Buddhist rhetoric and ideology are utilized as means for concealing sexual violence and oppression directed towards the figure of the *chigo*. I will first give a brief overview of



the scholarship to show how this reading has become the norm when interpreting these tales. In doing so, I hope to illustrate what seems to me one of the greatest methodological hurdles in reading these tales - that is, the tendency to read them as either quasi-religious texts, or, as purely literary productions, and therefore, to divide the labor between specialists of Japanese literary studies, and scholars of Buddhist studies.

When handled as literary texts, the tendency is to regard the *chigo monogatari* as part of a larger package of *nanshoku* fiction that culminates in the works of Edo period authors, Ihara Saikaku and his *Nanshoku okagami* (男色大鑑), or *Great Mirror of Male Love* in particular<sup>9</sup>. Reading them as medieval precursors to the popularized and commercialized *nanshoku* culture of the Tokugawa period, some literary scholars have tended to underemphasize the religious and Buddhist themes within the texts<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, Buddhologists, as well as literary scholars who wish to emphasize the religious nature of the texts, have either uncritically endorsed them as reflective of Buddhist doctrine, or, have regarded them as reflective of social realities experienced by the historical counterparts of the fictionalized monks and acolytes in the tales, and to this degree have tended to overlook the multivalent thematic content which is clearer when we regard them as vernacular or popular culture and literature.<sup>11</sup> To this end, I hope to give a fuller account of the *chigo monogatari* by situating them in both their literary and

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<sup>9</sup> Ihara, Saikaku, and Paul G. Schalow. *The Great Mirror of Male Love*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1990.

<sup>10</sup> For more on the way that Tokugawa inscriptions of *nanshoku* operated on their own terms, see Gregory M. Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> To understand how images of *nanshoku* were also part and parcel of the Meiji governments program of modernization, with a vested influence in distancing themselves from “backwards” Tokugawa policies and culture, see Jim Reichert, *In the Company of Men: Representations of Male-Male Sexuality in Meiji Literature*, Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2006.

religious dimensions, understanding them as expressions of Buddhist understandings, as well as literary representations which take on Buddhist concerns. In so doing, I hope to show how literary representation and writing was one mode through which Buddhist discourses were known, placing *chigo monogatari* at the cross section of Buddhist and popular writing, and reading them as vehicles for articulating various Buddhist concerns that include, but are not limited to *nanshoku*. It with this model of reading that I hope to also critically engage the trajectory of scholarly treatments of *chigo monogatari*.

### ***Defining Chigo Monogatari***

The most well known definition of the *chigo monogatari* comes from Ichiko Teiji's work, *Chūsei shosetsu no kenkyū* (中世小説の研究) published in 1955, in which he identifies the six categories of the *otogizoshi* (御伽草子), or "companion tales" written sometime in the Muromachi period, but only widely circulated and published during the Edo period<sup>12</sup>. The six main categories, each with several subheadings, are 1) tales about the aristocracy, 2) religious tales, 3) warrior tales, 4) commoner tales, 5) tales about foreign countries, and 6) (non-human) animal tales. *Chigo monogatari* fall under the second category of religious tales, and are explicitly characterized by Ichiko as very often containing the theme of *nanshoku*, identifying this proclivity as one of tales' defining features. A year later, Iwata Jun'ichi published his bibliography of Japanese literary sources featuring male-male sexuality, *Nanshoku bunken shoshi* (男色文献書志) in 1956, including in it the standout *chigo monogatari*, *Aki no yo no Nagamonogatari* (秋夜長物語) among others<sup>13</sup>. Ichiko's characterization and Iwata's inclusion of the tales in his

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<sup>12</sup> Ichiko Teij, *Chūsei Shōsetsu No Kenkyū*, Tōkyō: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1955.

<sup>13</sup> Iwata Jun'ichi, *Nanshoku Bunken Shoshi*, Tōkyō: Koten Bunko, 1956.

bibliography cemented the understanding that the tales were primarily concerned with *nanshoku*. Because of the representation of monks and acolytes within the stories, Ichiko also suggests that the authors, who still remain unknown, were likely Buddhist officials.

The suggestion that the authors were monks might have been validated by the content of some of the tales, at least in the eyes of some scholars. In addition to displaying sophisticated descriptions of key Buddhist themes like impermanence, the *Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari* and *Ashibiki* (あしびき) include depictions of feuds between major temples, Onjoji and Enryakuji in the former, and Kofukuji and Enryakuji in the latter. To this degree, it is not simply thematic content, but also historical context, that gives us some indication of who scripted the stories<sup>14</sup>. In fact, these entities had been embroiled in a series of long standing conflicts, with the kyoto based rival Tendai temples Onjoji and Enryakuji vying for institutional independence and culminating in a series of actual armed conflicts that spanned the years of the tenth to twelfth centuries. Kofukuji, a Nara based temple of the Hosso denomination and the tutelary temple of the Fujiwara, was a rival of Onjoji and Enryakuji, and became bound up in the political factionalism between Go-Sanjo and the Fujiwara. Go-Sanjo was the first emperor since Uda one hundred seventy years prior, who was not mothered by the powerful clan, and his policies of exclusion against Kofukuji would later be taken up and expanded by his son Go-Shirakawa, who constructed a series of imperial temples, including Hosshoji, explicitly positioned against Kofukuji and other Fujiwara run temples. That these tales are not only set against the backdrop of actual institutional feuds involving Buddhist

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<sup>14</sup> For more on the historical background of these armed conflicts, see Mikael S Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000.

temples, but also that the rivalries between the temples sets up the tragic, "star-crossed" circumstances of the monk-acolyte love depicted, suggests more than a passing knowledge of the depths of the feuds. Its not hard to see how scholars may have assumed that such familiarity could only be accessible to an insider who understood the conditions well enough to know that an affair between members of these rival temples could not end well<sup>15</sup>.

For nearly three decades Ichiko's understanding of *chigo monogatari* continued to be the norm. That is, the texts were understood as 1) always featuring a monk and acolyte, 2) often containing depictions of male-male romance, and 3) were monk authored. In particular, the understanding that the tales not only contained descriptions of *nanshoku*, but that *nanshoku* was the primary object of concern for them only became more pronounced. For example, the *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, the largest Japanese dictionary to ever be printed, and published in 1972, includes the prevalence of sexual relationships between monks and acolytes in its definition of *chigo*<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, in his dictionary of medieval Japanese literature published in 1961, Araki Yoshio also understands the religious content of the *chigo monogatari* as a pretext for the central concern of the tales, the romance between monk and *chigo*<sup>17</sup>. The result was to lead scholars to largely consider the usefulness of studying *chigo monogatari* to have been exhausted.

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<sup>15</sup> For more on the imbrication of Buddhist temples with courtly politics and the *bakufu*, see Kuroda Toshio's famous theory of *kenmon taisei*, especially in Kuroda Toshio, *Kenmon Taiseiron*, Kyōto-shi: Hōzōkan, 1994.

<sup>16</sup> *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*, Tōkyō: Shōgakkan, 1972.

<sup>17</sup> Araki Yoshio. *Chūsei Kamakura Muromachi Bungaku Jiten*, Tōkyō: Shunjūsha, 1961.

### *Moving Beyond Nanshoku and a New Impasse*

It would not be until Margaret Childs's work, *Chigo Monogatari: Love Stories or Buddhist Sermons?* (1980), the first publication in English dealing extensively with the tales, that any significant challenge was made to the dominant theory that the stories were best understood as *nanshoku* literature<sup>18</sup>. Childs was primarily concerned with the degree to which readings of the *chigo monogatari* had come to all but ignore the religious import of the texts. Childs had two major concerns; the first was that the tales had been grouped together under the banner of *nanshoku* due to modern antipathy towards homosexuality, and secondly, she hoped to show that a focus on the religious themes of the text might recuperate some of the tales' value because, as she understood it, the classification of them as *nanshoku* literature had caused them to not be seriously considered by Japanese scholars. Their religious import was especially notable in the persistence of the theme of transience, or *mujo* (無常). As she writes: "The contention that the religious conclusions of the tales are artificial contrivances designed to exonerate priests is further belied by the intensity and power of the concept of transience (*mujo*) in *chigo monogatari*. In most of the stories an inexorable series of events develops a sense of the uncertainty of life until it climaxes in a final blow, a profound, personal loss that forces a priest to accept the futility of all attachments to this world"<sup>19</sup>. It is to this end that Childs believes that the stories served as didactic parables, or in her words, "sermons" designed to teach monks about the impermanence of desire and the route to Buddhist salvation as a letting-go of attachment.

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<sup>18</sup> Margaret H. Childs, "Chigo Monogatari. Love Stories or Buddhist Sermons?" *Monumenta Nipponica*. 35.2 (1980): 127-151.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.128

Although not concerned with *chigo monogatari* directly, Ito Masayoshi's work on the myth of Jido, a popular subject of Noh drama, also appeared in 1980, and would be of importance to how the figure of *chigo* was perceived, helping eventually to change how *chigo monogatari* were read as well<sup>20</sup>. The story, which is currently performed in abridged form, features a young male attendant of King Mu of Zhou, who describes his love affair with the king to an imperial envoy that encounters him during his travels - but the envoy is unconvinced, for King Mu had reigned some three hundred years prior. As Paul Atkins has shown, an earlier version, contained in the *Taiheki*, also described the tragic nature of the child's fate, in which he was sent into exile for having stepped over the King's pillow. Furthermore, it contains a detail not available in the version of the tale performed today on the Noh stage - taking pity on how lonely the young man would be in exile, the King secretly transmits three verses of the *Lotus Sutra* to the boy, who in turn, upon returning from his exile some eight hundred years later, gives the same verses to a new sovereign, Emperor Wen of Wei.

Ito found that the story, which seemingly reflected a continental precedent, in fact had none, and was rather, very likely scripted by Japanese Tendai monks. Ito theorized that the tale was created as a means of making sense of why Buddhist ritual elements, such as the chanting of the *Lotus Sutra*, were involved in the imperial ascension ceremonies. Specifically, Ito discovered that a Tendai ritual manual on the imperial ascension ceremony contained the story<sup>21</sup>. Unlike the *Taiheki* version of the story that ends with a reminder to be aware of auspicious signs sent by the Buddha, the Tendai text

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<sup>20</sup> Ito Masayoshi. "Jido setsuwa Ko". *Kokugo Kokubun* 555,49 (11): 1-32. 1980.

<sup>21</sup> For more see, Kamikawa Michio. "Accession Rituals and Buddhism in Medieval Japan." *Journal of Religious Studies* 17 (2-3); 243-80. 1990.

concludes by reinforcing the importance of repeating the transmission of verses as the King had done for Jido, and as Jido had done for Emperor Wen. What Ito's work on Jido contributed to the study of *chigo monogatari* was the possibility of understanding the tales as fictionalized accounts which contained the very real ideological agendas of its Buddhist authors. While Ito's concern was largely with how Tendai priests were able to link themselves to the throne through utilizing the Jido myth as an explanation for their role in the ascension ritual, it is not hard to see certain equivalences between the Jido myth and the valorization of *chigo* in the *chigo monogatari* tradition.

Like the tale of Jido, which quickly glosses over the fact that the romantic partnership between the young attendant and the King is pederastic, and which seems to regard the placement of the child in exile as a means to a higher end, the *chigo monogatari* appear to make the same kinds of maneuvers, subordinating the monk/acolyte relationship to the Buddhist goal of spiritual salvation. They also both feature heavily Tendai oriented religious themes, the esoteric and clandestine nature of transmission in the Jido tale, and the theory of *honji suijaku* in the *chigo monogatari*, especially in *Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari* and *Genmu Monogatari* in which the *chigo* is revealed to be the avatar of Kannon, the Bodhisattva of compassion, after they have died. Furthermore, in both, the young boy is both sacralized and dehumanized - their unsavory fates are seen as necessary to transmit higher ideals of Buddhist truth. The works of Paul Atkins and Bernard Faure also seize upon the similarities between the two to suggest some of the ideological impetus behind the composition of the *chigo monogatari*, with Atkins even suggesting that the Jido story helped to legitimate the "chigo system"<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Paul S. Atkins, "Chigo in the Medieval Japanese Imagination." *The Journal of Asian Studies*. 67.3 (2008): p. 967.

What remained unaddressed in Childs's and Ito's work was the seemingly inevitable violent fate that befell the *chigo* in most of the tales. With *nanshoku* becoming the tales' central meaning through scholarship, the subsequent work of Childs in particular, had largely glossed the violent nature of the "transience" that characterized the *chigos'* lives in the tales. Where Childs had seen the death of the *chigo* in the stories as a religiously efficacious and didactic parable of non-attachment, Faure in particular would see in them the manipulation of Buddhist ideals to endorse the ongoing abuse of children which appears to have been prevalent in medieval Japanese monasteries. In fact, in his work, the *Red Thread* (1998), in which he dedicates two chapters, "Buddhist Homosexualities" and "From Boys to Men," to the practice of *nanshoku* and the standpoint of the *chigo*, Faure would occupy the position that Childs had criticized nearly two decades prior - he would indeed standardize the understanding in Western language scholarship that the religious ideology and rhetoric present in the tales were sites in which a "crude ideological cover-up" had taken place<sup>23</sup>.

I will return to Faure's work, as it has been incredibly influential in the Western language reception of *chigo monogatari*, but contains some problematic features which I hope to address. Before doing so I would like to introduce a few more recent works to illustrate how Faure's thesis has not been seriously contested. In particular, Paul Atkins 2008 article, "*Chigo* in the Medieval Japanese Imagination", has continued and expanded on the work that Faure's book began. Atkins article is especially concerned with understanding why and how the violent fate that befalls the acolyte became so prevalent in the *chigo monogatari*. As I have already mentioned, Atkin's carefully addresses the

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<sup>23</sup> Bernard Faure, *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality*, Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1998.



links between the Jido story and the *chigo* tales, but he takes the comparison a step further, suggesting an equivalence between the Jido myth and the story of Yang Guifei, which in turn links the *chigo monogatari* to the infamous tale of the Chinese courtier. As Atkins notes, in both accounts a Chinese sovereign, captured by the beauty of a favored lover, becomes so lovestruck that he can no longer serve his imperial duties properly, and subsequently is counseled to remove the lover by his advisors, whereupon the lover becomes deified. For Atkins, by placing the two tales together alongside the *chigo monogatari*: "...we can see a larger pattern emerge. Both Yang Guifei and the *Jido* are scapegoat figures, singled out for punishment because the real culprit - the emperor or king who permitted his affections to interfere with the governance of the realm - is beyond reproach"<sup>24</sup>. Atkins reads the *chigo monogatari* as also providing a kind of scapegoat, a term he borrows from the work of Rene Girard, whereby responsibility for the transgressive behavior of monks was passed to the *chigo*. The seeming paradox shared by these tales in which they are simultaneously deified on the one hand, and dehumanized and subjected to violence on the other, is put into relief when we realize that the *chigo's* function was to: "'absorb' violence in order to prevent its spread between families or rival temples," and that ultimately, "He is a sacred victim who in fiction converts violence into divine will and in the abbot's bedchamber converts violation of monastic precepts against sexual contact into sublime ritual and communion with the sacred"<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Atkins, *Chigo in the Medieval Japanese Imagination*, 2008, p.963.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.967

While Atkins expands on the reading of the *chigo monogatari* presented by Faure by including analyses of literary representational strategies alongside Buddhist ones, he seems to concur with Faure's point that the texts function as sites for idealizing the violence that *chigo* were likely subjected to outside of the stories in the real world, which ultimately validated the transgression of monastic precepts through religious discourse. In the years following Atkins' essay, very little has been published on the *chigo monogatari*. A 2011 publication by Atkins' former student Sachi Schmidt Hori (which will be described in more detail in Chapter 2), and a Japanese publication in the same year by Ryuen Hiramatsu are among them, but the topic has been largely given up, suggesting that Faure and Atkins' understanding has been widely accepted. Hiramatsu's article in which he seeks to delineate the structure of the sexual relationship between monk and acolyte as it took specific shape in Japan is interesting in that it is one of the only articles that examines the relationship with the monk as the focal point rather than the *chigo*, and his conclusion that the *jikanjou* ritual, which likely was influenced by nativist Shinto rituals, had no corollary elsewhere is unique. However, the article has failed to garner much attention<sup>26</sup>.

Could it be the case then that the interpretation of *chigo monogatari* as idealizations of violence, or as Faure calls it, a “crude ideological cover-up,” has exhausted the full range of possible meanings that the stories signify? On the other hand, perhaps we might also simply conclude as some literary historians have that the *chigo monogatari's* central importance is in providing a preliminary step to the booming *nanshoku* culture depicted in the Tokugawa literary genre, the *ukiyo-zoshi*. I am inclined

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<sup>26</sup> Hiramatsu, Ryuen. “Nihon Bukkyo ni Okeru Sou to Chigo no Nanshoku”. Tokyo. Kokusai Nihon Nunka Kenkyu center. 2007.

to think however that there remain ways to uncover further significance from these tales. To do so, I will suggest alternative readings in the chapters that follow, but for the moment, it seems necessary to engage with Faure in particular, so that we might make these new paths for reading available outside of the current scholarly consensus.

***Chigo Monogatari: 'Crude ideological cover-ups' or...?***

In reviewing the scholarship regarding the *chigo monogatari* tradition, it is hoped that it has become clear how certain standardized readings of the stories have crystalized through the years spanning into the second half of the twentieth century and into the current decade. While potentially limiting, it is necessary to note that the Faurian way of understanding the tales is by no means invalid. In fact, the degree to which such approaches have attempted to expose the corruption and abuses of the past is not only admirable, but timely. Surely, these tales with their glorifications of intergenerational and pederastic relationships between acolytes and monks, resonates with the ongoing sex abuse scandal that has plagued the Catholic Church since the early 2000's. The international and global scale of this scandal has made the public, perhaps now more than ever before, keenly aware of the potential for abuse that exists in the uneven power relationship between religious officials and their disciples.

While acknowledging that the dynamic between monk and acolyte in these tales necessitates a critical awareness of the imbalance of power that is inscribed in the master/disciple relationship, as well as in the disparity in agency between child and adult, I nevertheless believe these interpretations to be, if not reductive, at least partially limiting. That is not to say that the monk/acolyte relationship somehow avoids falling into the category of abuse, but that reducing the entirety of the *chigo monogatari's*

potential significations to a means of concealing violence does a certain injustice to the richness of these tales. Rather than an apologia for historical realities of sexual violence that no doubt befell the *chigo*, the suggestion to go beyond such interpretations is concerned with reading the tales for knowledge of themes, motifs, and discursive concerns which have gone under analyzed. What we might learn if we expand our reading to include, but also, go beyond the current scholarly consensus is, among other things, how these tales served to inscribe the figure of the *chigo* with an especially potent capacity for Buddhist enlightenment, and how they provided a means for describing the sacredness of children more generally. On the same token, these tales also contain problematic features that extend beyond the question of sexual abuse, but also potentially implicate them in other forms of oppressive rhetoric, including issues of institutionalized sexism and the construction of uneven gender norms.

To make these pathways for reading available, I feel it necessary to describe some of the ways in which Faure's analysis in particular has delimited the possible ways in which the stories can be read. Faure's work on *chigo monogatari* is contained in a more ambitious project of delineating the construction of Buddhist sexual rhetoric throughout its many historical, geo-political, and doctrinal instantiations. Faure's goal is to show how “transgressive” sexual practices, which by their nature go against the strict regulations of the monastic precepts, and include *nanshoku*, can be read as a kind of “Buddhist” discourse on sexuality in general. Informing and undergirding this understanding is the discursive logic of the “two-fold truth” in Mahayana Buddhism, through which conventional wisdom is affirmed and not effaced under the auspice of ultimate truth *qua* emptiness, and is utilized as a means of realizing “awakening.”

Far from reifying this logic and submitting it exclusively to the signifier “transgression”, Faure is careful to point out that it is in its enactment that we may see “Buddhism,” particularly in its Mahayanist instantiation as a discourse in motion. That is, at least as it concerns sexuality, and we imagine other socially produced and reproduced identities and practices, Buddhism ultimately contains the kernel of its own deconstruction, through which at least two possibilities emerge: “On the one hand we have a kind of Buddhist humanism, on the other a quasi-Dionysian vision of sexuality. Although they draw on the same motto (the nonduality of passions and awakening), the two movements have radically different motivations”<sup>27</sup>. Either as a mode of expressing a kind of Buddhist subject or as a means of reaching awakening in the the "quasi-Dionysian" dissolution of self and other through sex, the nonduality of passions, the “two fold truth,” through the enactment of sexuality in its transgressive modalities, operates as means of revealing Buddhism itself as a discursive tradition that ultimately cannot efface itself as a discourse. For Faure, the sketching of sexuality in both modes, as transgressive and self-forming, or as transcendent and self-effacing, are both expressed through a Buddhist language of nonduality, pointing back to a discursivity that grounds the possibility of such articulations to begin with. The caveat of course is that this discourse that has “usually tried to reduce the multiplicity of possible attitudes towards sex and to circumscribe sexuality as a single problem, liable to a single solution”<sup>28</sup>, was mobilized for various reasons, and thus conceals differently lived experiences within it. Modulations to this sexual discourse are made by monks and Buddhist practitioners who

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<sup>27</sup> Faure, *The Red Thread*, 1998, p. 143

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286

either obey the letter of the law, the prohibition of sex generally, or transgress it: “either through observance of the rule or on the contrary through its transgression, monks have always claimed a distinct sexuality...”<sup>29</sup>. Faure goes on to claim that a shift in either modality, transgressive or obedient, would have a ripple effect on Buddhism in its “entirety.” This is resonant with Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* which he describes thus:

In a society divided into classes, all the products of a given agent...speak inseparably and simultaneously of his/her class – or more precisely, his/her position and rising or falling trajectory within the social structure – and of his/her body – or more precisely, of all the properties, always socially qualified, of which he/she is the bearer: sexual ones, of course, but also physical properties that are praised like strength or beauty, or stigmatized<sup>30</sup>.

For Faure, transgression and obedience are the *habitus* that operate within an ideological parameter, or *doxa*, as Bourdieu would put it, through which the individual body articulates the *habitus* of, in this case, “Buddhism.” I read Faure as thus inhabiting what Saba Mahmood has called the binary of enactment/resistance, in which scholars, especially those influenced by post-structuralist theory, posit that a subject is formed either through enacting (observance of the rule) or resisting and contesting it (its “transgression”). As she argues against Bourdieu: “One may argue however, that the significance of an embodied practice is not exhausted by its ability to function as an index of social and class status as a group’s ideological habitus”<sup>31</sup>. It is precisely contrary to this, but in and through participation in particular discursive traditions that

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.280

<sup>30</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p.79.

<sup>31</sup> Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005, p. 26.

Mahmood argues that subjects are formed. To take it one step further, the production of knowledge about lived experiences within the requirements of a given ideology renders all activity within it as reflecting the whole of habitualized and socialized activity. Even resistance becomes enactment, and even Buddhist transgression of sexual norms is inextricably circumscribed within the limits of ideology. While it is necessary to inhabit this understanding, especially if we are to avoid reifying notions of authentic religious experience and "pure" religious doctrine detached from social realities, it nonetheless remains the case that we may still understand the formation of subjectivities within the threshold of discourse *differently*, as Foucault might put it. It is thus the crucial task of the religious studies scholar to describe the interior, both of the discourse that forms particular subjectivities, and the practices that they embody, that is, quite literally, in which some-body participates. In another formulation, it is essential to read textual productions which contribute to the deployment of ideology not only for the ideological parameters which animate them, but also, for the possibility of multiple embedded subject standpoints within them.

In his reading of *chigo monogatari* in particular, Faure has a tendency to reduce the subject of the *chigo* inscribed within its parameters to primarily serving the purposes of concealing the realities of rape and violence in their idealized image. To this extent, Faure is critical of scholars who have attempted to understand the *chigo monogatari* at the level of their authorial intentionality, especially as a means of affirming, what Russell McCutcheon has called the "jargon of authenticity."<sup>32</sup> For example, Childs writes: "The tales should be judged according to the motivations that inspired their composition, for

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<sup>32</sup> Russell T. McCutcheon, *The Discipline of Religion: Structure, Meaning, Rhetoric*, London: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2003.

the priests who wrote them were creating a literature relevant to their own experiences, stories that depict a religious response to the tragedies of life”<sup>33</sup>. By seeing the "motivations that inspired their composition" as the final hermeneutic and critical horizon for their reception, Childs' reading, in which she concludes that *chigo monogatari* are best as understood sermons, conceals the harsh realities of the *chigo's* historical experience and their "social reality." More importantly, she fails to see that the heavily idealized figure of the *chigo* was not utilized merely for revealing "a religious response to the tragedies of life," but also, a religio-ideological concealment of violence. For Faure, the true tragedy that we should read these texts for is the production of the subjectivity, not of a monk, but of the *chigo* as an inherently unprivileged one forged in the contours of an uneven power structure. Or, we might also understand the way in which the sexuality of the monk was the focus and true subject of the *nanshoku*, relationship, particularly given its intergenerational structure in which the younger, sometimes very young *chigo* had no sexuality of his own. More decisively that *nanshoku* was a “euphemization of exploitation through mystical discourse”<sup>34</sup> and a “crude ideological cover-up for a kind of institutionalized prostitution or rape”<sup>35</sup>.

Nonetheless, what remains troubling, and this is despite his self-designated task to skirt the articulation of a monolithic and singular Buddhism, and rather affirm “*Buddhisms*,” is his understanding of Buddhist discursivity, which cannot help but be expressed as *a* Buddhist discourse throughout the text. Formulations such as the

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<sup>33</sup> Childs, *Chigo Monogatari*, 1980, p. 130.

<sup>34</sup> Faure, *The Red Thread*, 1998, p.275

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265



“ideology of transgression,” “Buddhist sexualities” and even, the “Buddhist will to transcendence” all point to such a reification. To be clear, Faure operates outside of a totalizing narrative that reduces religious discourse to doctrine, and instead only makes the provisional gesture of underlining a seemingly continuous rhetoric that aligns Buddhist theories of non-duality with acts of sexual transgression, in order to open the way for anthropological insights into how subjects may have experienced such rhetorics. We see that Faure has shown great concern for the differences between and among those who inhabit discourse, and here he is quick to remind us that no matter how much “Buddhism” may have attempted to reduce sexuality, for a given subject: “We need to keep in mind that this reality was fundamentally different – singular, diverse, elusive, changing” (286). Clearly, in his analysis of the coming to be of a specifically Buddhist sexual discourse as it appears in key moments of Buddhist history, Faure is rightfully cautious. On the other hand, we might ask of him, what else does discourse contain? Is it necessarily the case that as ideological systems, texts such as *chigo monogatari* can only be read strictly for how dominant Buddhist discourses deploy them? In other words, does revealing the ideological parameters of idealized textual representations completely account for what these texts are “doing”? Or, more specifically, does a subject of discourse act primarily as a means of revealing the character of the very discourse that structures it? Do *chigo monogatari* specifically, only operate at the level of how they are deployed?

In many ways, it would appear that for Faure, the representation of *chigo* in *chigo monogatari* points exclusively toward the ideological premises of their idealized inscriptions. It is in his utilization of these narrative texts as reflections of the *chigo*’s

subjugation and oppression that he downplays the figurative value of the *chigo*, in favor of their capacity to signify something like historical reality. As he writes : “It would be an error... to try to gather these excerpts... into a unified discourse, which would supposedly explain and help to recover a social reality”<sup>36</sup>. But not a page later he claims: “although these stories have their own structural (literary dynamics)... we can still argue that they were used in... specific strategies of power and of ideological justifications, in attempts to present an inverted, sublimated, or euphemized image of social relationships”<sup>37</sup>. By showing how ideology is historically and socially contingent, Faure hopes to show that the products of such ideologies, like the *chigo monogatari* cannot escape the same contingencies. But he also largely disregards the degree to which the tales generate figurative meanings that might be read in opposition to such displays of ideological operation. It is not clear how his attempt to emphasize the actuality of ideological discourse as a social reproduction is entirely separated from regarding the tales as a means of depicting social reality. He glosses over their "literary dynamics" in favor of reading them for how they support the rhetorical maneuvers of monks justifying their transgressions, and such a reading is ultimately no less reliant on a view that history supersedes literary significance than an approach that would "gather these excerpts... into a unified discourse, which would supposedly explain and help to recover a social reality.”

In order to do justice to the many possible ways in which the tales figure and imbue the *chigo* with meaning, it is necessary to de-emphasize the degree to which they exclusively serve the purposes of historical monks, at least provisionally, and attempt to

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 244

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 244-245

let the tales, as well as alternative background discourses speak for themselves. This is possible if we not only take seriously the extent to which Buddhism is *not* a singular discourse, something Faure attempts to do, but at moments seems to fail to deliver on his promise, and therefore, to also destabilize the degree to which products of this multifaceted discourse such as vernacular literature including *chigo monogatari* are themselves irreducible to a singular Buddhist meaning. To do so, one must chart possible discursive Buddhist constructions that exceed Faure's delimitations of the *chigo monogatari* to transgressive sexual rhetoric, and also, to pay attention to how the texts themselves form meaning through its literary and figurative language. If we take Mahmood's criticisms seriously as well, even when we do regard discursive and ideological formulations of identity as reflections of social, cultural, and historical reality, the meaning of such realities is necessarily multivalent, and never univocal. Just as it is impossible, as she shows in her own project, to reduce Muslim women's participation in Islamic ritual to blind re-articulation of necessarily oppressive and androcentric discourses, ignoring the degree to which women might be able to positively construct aspects of their religious and social identities in and through such rituals, I argue that reducing the figurative value of the *chigo* to a reiteration of the discursive means of his subjugation is equally dubious. Such a reading regards the *chigo's* only possible value to how own his image is used against himself.

### ***Conclusion***

In the preceding I have outlined the general trajectory of scholarly readings of the *chigo monogatari*. I have done so in order to show how the study of these tales has largely been structured around two major impasses - the first is the restriction of the

meaning of these stories to their representations of male-male sexuality, and the second, that *chigo monogatari* were ideological "cover-ups." This latter interpretation is the product of regarding the tales as reflective of oppressive rhetorics that can only be actively resisted, or passively reproduced. In another way of putting it, the represented and fictionalized *chigo* is understood to have very little interiority and subjectivity of his own, and is instead viewed as an empty canvas upon which monks painted their justifications and exonerations of their institutionally prohibited behaviors.

From another perspective, as scholars of the sociology of religion increasingly reconsider the notion that modernity implies a slow but consistent process of secularization, it becomes that much more important to recognize the extent to which, as Peter Berger notes, much of early and premodern society sat within what he calls the "sacred canopy." In his more recent work, Berger has come to question the degree to which modernization implies secularization, even claiming that: "To be sure, modernization has had some secularizing effects, more in some places than others. But it has also provoked powerful movements of counter-secularization. Also, secularization on the societal level is not necessarily linked to secularization on the level of individual consciousness"<sup>38</sup>. In other words, contrary to Weber's famous notion of the "disenchantment" of the world, it has become increasingly clear that not only has religion remained a major facet of the social behavior of individuals, but also, many have argued that in a time in which religion has reemerged in public discourse, the role of religion has become more deeply felt. It is not only within the sociology of religion in the age of globalization, but in literary studies too, that it remains imperative for early and

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<sup>38</sup> Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1967, p.3.

premodern texts to be analyzed with respect to their religious underpinnings. It is not simply that socially and historically specific ideologies undergird religions: the converse is also true, that religiously specific ideologies constitute one facet of the consciousness of social and historical actors. Most crucially for the present analysis, at the level of representation - the rhetorical, figurative, and ideological interrelationships and strategies deployed in the creation of literary subjects - religious, or in this case, "Buddhist" discourse informs the inscription of the *chigo*.

It is thus crucial to remain attuned to the permeation of religious language and rhetoric into the pages of vernacular "secular" literature. The challenge is to do so without falling back into the trap of de-historicizing the religious cultures that inform and mediate the production of such texts. To this degree, I hope to show that the representation of *chigo* in the *chigo monogatari* does not constitute a static subject standpoint, nor that a representation of *chigo* ultimately emerged. Rather, "representation" should be taken to signify the *act* of presenting and re-presenting a subject through a variety of historical frames, rhetorics, and agendas. The process of representation through which the *chigo* is inscribed therefore includes the very means of his own subjugation, but also, a wide range of images and motifs that can be understood as ultimately "Buddhist," and hold with them a variety of sometimes conflicting, sometimes cohesive meanings. Put another way, it is possible to explore the many nodes of cultural signification that constitute the *chigo's* representation without reducing it to a singular meaning, and still remaining critically aware of ideological and personal motivations that may have informed the particular way in which the *chigo* came to be represented. In so doing, we might still account for what is "Buddhist" in these texts,

without reducing their meaning to their exclusively religious import, or, to the ideological operations of religious discourse, while at the same time acknowledging the degree to which a wholly secularized account of the text remains untenable. I hope to adopt this awareness of the relationship between vernacular literature and religious discourse when reading *chigo monogatari* in the chapters that follow.

## CHAPTER III

### THE *CHIGO'S* FLUID GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN *CHIGO IMAMAIRI*

As Gregory Pflugfelder has noted, the term "homosexuality" is not a broadly applicable category when interpreting sexual identity and politics in non-Western societies. More specifically, he writes: "Subject to critical scrutiny, [homosexuality's] once self-evident definition proves slippery, resisting attempts at reduction to some common denominator, such as acts, desires, persons, or relationships"<sup>39</sup>. Pflugfelder draws our attention to two major interpretive difficulties regarding the usage and cultural understanding of the term. First, as Foucault and other Western historians have noted, the notion of homosexuality constituting enclosed sexual identities is both a recent and Western construction<sup>40</sup>. It proves anachronistic then to speak of Buddhist, Japanese, monastic, or even Medieval "homosexualities," and for the purposes of the present study, it is difficult to equate the persistent theme of *nanshoku* in *chigo monogatari* with this Western and modern sexual identity. If, as I have attempted to argue in the preceding chapter, *nanshoku* does not sufficiently exhaust the representational possibilities of the *chigo*, it is due in no small part to the scholarly tendency to equate homosexuality and *nanshoku*. Secondly, if it is necessary to be aware of the anachronism of applying a Western term to a non-Western cultural system and textual tradition, it is equally necessary to avoid reducing the category of homosexuality in its Western historical

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<sup>39</sup> Gregory M. Pflugfelder, "Strange Fates. Sex, Gender, and Sexuality in Torikaebaya Monogatari". *Monumenta Nipponica*. 47.3 (1993): p. 361.

<sup>40</sup> Foucault's concern in the *History of Sexuality Volume I* is twofold. First he is interested in understanding the veritable explosion in discursive activity regarding sex and sexuality beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Western world. Secondly, he is interested in delineating how sexuality came to be evaluated morally, especially with regard to individual sexualities – and to this extent, he is also invested in analyzing the socio-historical construction of homosexuality. See Page 42-43 and 101-102 in particular.

context to a unified set of attributes. Only in proceeding with the understanding that no sexuality is monolithic can we appreciate the dynamic identities, sexual and otherwise, of the *chigo* as they take on literary, figurative, and representational significance within the space of the *chigo monogatari*.

Nevertheless, it is also not possible to approach the *chigo monogatari* tradition without giving an account of the *chigo's* sexuality, for surely even if we do not reduce his identity to *nanshoku*, homosexuality, or "victim", it is unavoidably the case that his sexuality plays a role in how he is to be shaped by the ideological parameters of the text. And in the case of the *chigo*, whose life was centered in the Medieval Japanese Buddhist monastery, the question of his sexuality will also be a question of a *Buddhistically informed* sexual identity. While we have argued that it is problematic to reduce the *chigo's* identity to a by-product of ideology, it will remain the case nonetheless that the character of the *chigo's* identity is forged in a heavily Buddhist matrix. If this is the case, what are we to make of this sexuality? If it is not "homosexual" or even "bisexual" how are we to interpret it? Perhaps the answer lies in analyzing the Buddhist sources themselves as Faure does. Perhaps as Faure suggests there is something like a common rhetoric of transgression that underlies sexual behavior in monastic life, in Buddhist ideology, and in turn, the socio-cultural landscapes that this ideology informs. On the other hand, we have seen that the attempt to describe the ideological foundation of emergent identities has a tendency to merely repeat and reiterate that identities are always ideological. While such a critical understanding is necessary to avoid falling into the trap of reproducing ideological assumptions, in the *chigo's* case we have argued that this leaves open the question of *what else*, and perhaps more decisively, what *other*



ideological systems, inform their representation.

Sachi Schmidt-Hori's recent publication provides an intriguing option<sup>41</sup>. She identifies the *Chigo imamai* as a unique tale insofar as it defies the usual expectation of a male-male sexual relationship between master and acolyte as the protagonist pursues a romantic relationship with a woman, but also because it appears to be a mostly secularized account. Its uniqueness within the tradition thus provides a critical alternative to the so far widely accepted understanding that *chigo monogatari* are largely motivated by a desire to validate the sexual transgression of monks. Instead, she posits that the tale suggests a fluid boundary between and amongst sexualized and gendered identities. I hope to flesh out and examine this claim by closely reading the *chigo imamai*.

However, there are a variety of problematic claims in Schmidt-Hori's account that must be addressed. First is how she attempts to qualify the tale's particularity within the tradition: "*Chigo imamai* dramatically differs from the rest of the acolyte tales in its relative lack of religiosity, happy ending, want of violence, and the hero's heterosexuality"<sup>42</sup>. As is evident, it would appear that on Schmidt-Hori's reading, the rest of the tradition *is* defined by their religious import, their depiction of tragedy and violence befalling the *chigo*, and by their sexuality. In this way she echoes Childs, Faure, and Atkins. Her reading of the tale's sexual and gender fluidity is thus an attempt to classify the tale as unique, and in so doing, homogenizes the rest of the tradition. While it is impossible to reduce these tales to a unified discourse, it is nevertheless the case that

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<sup>41</sup> Schmidt-Hori, Sachi "The New Lady-in-Waiting Is a Chigo: Sexual Fluidity and Dual Transvestism in a Medieval Buddhist Acolyte Tale." *Japanese Language and Literature* , Vol. 43, No. 2 (October 2009), pp. 383-423.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 386

they have been historically and culturally defined as a sub-genre of *otogizoshi*, and as such, while remaining critical of the unifying tendency of any categorization, we have undertaken the task of reading the tradition for its common thematic and representational tendencies, the wide swath of which constitutes one of the richest and most authoritative sites for understanding how the figure of the acolyte was perceived. If we understand the *Chigo imamairi* as not simply heterodox, but as one tale amongst others within the *chigo monogatari* tradition, then its departures from the rest of the tales can serve to illustrate an alternative discourse of sexuality from within the tradition itself. Finally, I argue that it is not only *Chigo imamairi* that blends and complicates gender roles, sexual identities, and depicts the fluidity of these categories, but that a more subtle reading would suggest that many of the tradition's stories share this sensibility.

Secondly, she exonerates *Chigo imamairi* of the guilt shared by the bulk of the tradition by suggesting that: "*Chigo imairi's* lay and perhaps female authorship [indicates that]... the endorsement of man-boy relationships, secular or religious, would not have been the author's vested interest"<sup>43</sup>. As with Childs (who views the religious intention of the text's authors as its final hermeneutic horizon), Faure (whose Bourdieuan approach focuses on understanding the ideological underpinnings that belie the monkhood's superficial religious rhetoric), and Atkins (who conflates the representation of the *chigo* with the historical function that they may have served for their masters), Schmidt-Hori seems to rest much of her analysis on the authorial intention of monks, and in the case of *Chigo imairi*, its lay author. One challenge which I have attempted to address is precisely to move beyond an interpretation based on speculative intentionality. And

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 392

again here we see that she does not offer any new model for interpreting the broader spectrum of the tradition's representational tendencies.

Despite these problems, Schmidt-Hori's attempt is instructive. The fluidity of categories pertaining to gender and sexuality is one way in which we might read an activity other than the "crude ideological cover-up" that is no doubt present, but to which the tale's many cultural and representational signifiers cannot be reduced. And contrary to Schmidt-Hori's analysis, the question of gender ambiguity and fluidity in particular is not unique to *Chigo imamai*, but arguably present in the majority of these tales, not the least of which is *Aki no yo no naga monogatari*, often argued to be the tradition's exemplary and defining tale. At key moments, the acolyte with whom the central protagonist Keikai is infatuated is described using traditionally feminine imagery such as flowers and blossoms, is described as Empress Li to Keikai's Emperor Wu, and, perhaps most notably, appears in a traditional courtship with Keikai that recalls Heian era male-female court romances. Additionally, the art historical record also suggests this ambiguity, insofar as many scholars have written on the difficulty of differentiating nuns and *chigo* in graphic depictions, which in turn suggests that there was a practice of dressing monks as young girls.<sup>44</sup> But it is perhaps the Heian era tale *Torikaebaya monogatari* that is the most instructive.

*Torikaebaya*, which is so named because the father of a son and daughter whose gender roles are switched exclaims "If only they could be exchanged!" ("*torikaebaya*"), evinces a complex understanding of gender relations and norms that is highly performative. As Pflugfelder notes, this fluidity should not be interpreted through the

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<sup>44</sup> See for example, Kuroda Hideo, *Sugata to shigusa no chūseishi: ezu to emaki no fūkei kara*, Tōkyō: BHeibonsha. 1998.

terms of Western categories of sexuality and gender relations, but must be read, as far as possible, with reference to the semantic universe of the text in which it is contained. To this extent, I hope to follow Pflugfelder in describing some of features of the *Torikaebaya*'s "system" of sexual, gender, and sex fluidity. I hope to then find similarities between *Torikaebaya*'s fluid notions of sexuality and gender identity and *Chigo imamai*'s own depictions, while also explicating the terms of their particular semantic systems of gender and sexual representation. This comparative analysis will help us in articulating a possible alternative discourse or counter-narrative in which we might find a working structure of sexual identity that resists reduction to homosexuality, *nanshoku* broadly understood, or the production of the *chigo*'s sexual identity through priestly discourse and authorial intention, and instead suggests the *chigo*'s particular sexuality on its own terms. Finally, as has been the case throughout, I pay close attention to motifs and themes from within Buddhist literature and scripture, and to this degree challenge Schmidt-Hori's contention that the representation of *chigo* in *Chigo imamai*, despite its possible lay authorship, can be read fully and completely secularized. Instead, we will find that certain kinds of androcentric discourses perpetuated through particular kinds of representations of women in Buddhism are repeated in these tales.

Alongside my close readings, I analyze Buddhist constructions of gender, sex and sexuality across a variety of doctrinal, historical, and geographical manifestations. In so doing, the *chigo*'s fluidity with respect to these categories becomes clearer and provides a way of understanding how the representation of his sexuality and gender is not reducible to sexual relationships with monks. This will provide an alternative reading that also resists the reduction of the tales' to their merely historical value, allowing their

representational richness and density to stand on their own. Along the way, the *chigo* also becomes a site for assisting us in thinking and understanding Buddhist notions of gender and sexuality differently.

### ***Chigo Imamairi***

I begin by summarizing the *Chigo imamairi*<sup>45</sup>. In order to understand the categories of gender and sexuality that are active in the tale, it is necessary to first foreground the *Chigo imamairi* to structure our readings of the Buddhist sources that follows. I also begin with the story itself because the *Chigo imamairi* provides an especially clear example of how the *chigo monogatari* in general are the *chigo's* stories. Unique to the tradition, the central protagonist of the tale is not the monk, but rather the *chigo*. The narrative anchoring of the tale in the vantage point of the *chigo* can therefore serve to show how the monkly standpoint and even the monk-*chigo* relationship are secondary to the representation of the acolyte as its central focus. It is this feature of the tale, and not the presumed secularity of its author that makes the tale unique within the broader *chigo monogatari* tradition.

The first volume of tale begins by introducing us to a man who holds a dual post as the Minister of the Center and the General of the Left. We find out that his daughter has fallen terribly ill. The man does all he can to cure her, but eventually running out of options, he enlists the help of the abbot of Enryakuji. The abbot arrives with his *chigo* in tow.

Upon arriving at the compound, the abbot sets about praying for the young woman. On the twentieth day following their arrival, *the chigo* decides to walk about the

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<sup>45</sup> For a full translation see Schmidt-Hori, Sachi "The New Lady-in-Waiting Is a Chigo: Sexual Fluidity and Dual Transvestism in a Medieval Buddhist Acolyte Tale." *Japanese Language and Literature*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (October 2009), pp. 393-411.

compound, when he chances upon the young woman, Himegimi, with her ladies in waiting. He hides just out of view and observes her from a distance. He is immediately taken with the young woman. He notes her immense beauty and is particularly in awe of her light hearted disposition. Realizing that the young woman has recovered from her illness the *chigo* becomes distraught at the thought of leaving the compound to return to Mt. Hiei, and falls ill himself. Furthermore, because she is betrothed to the crown prince, the *chigo* is all the more heartbroken. While the abbot returns to Enryakuji, the *chigo* goes to Uji to recuperate at the home of his former wet nurse.

The wet nurse, who cares deeply for the *chigo* comes to believe that the source of his illness is psychological or emotional rather than physical. Her suspicions are confirmed when he finds a piece of paper upon which the *chigo* had written repeatedly, "The only one I long for is she who I vaguely saw in the mist" and other such lamentations of heartbreak and love<sup>46</sup>.

The wet nurse decides to take action, and begins to devise a plot with her peers. She finds a particularly beautiful lacquer box, a gift to the *chigo's* master, and brings it to the compound. There she pretends to be delivering the box as commissioned order. She manages to bring the box to Himegimi, who in her honesty tells the wet nurse that no one ordered the box. The wet nurse proceeds to act as though the girl reminds her of her own daughter, who she tells Himegimi recently passed away. She tells Himegimi that because the box had become the source of their encounter, through which she was able to relive her love of her daughter, she would leave it with Himegimi as a gift. With this pretense the wet nurse becomes closely acquainted with Himegimi and her ladies in waiting.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 395

The wet nurse then suggests that Himegimi take on her "mistress" as an attendant. When the grateful Himegimi accepts, the wet nurse's plans become clearer. She intends to dress the *chigo* in the manner of a lady in waiting so that the two young people might become close and cure the *chigo* of his illness and heartbreak. Initially hesitant, the *chigo* quickly comes to comply with plan, realizing this will allow him to be in close quarters with his beloved. The wet nurse and her attendants successfully disguise the *chigo*, who makes for an especially beautiful lady in waiting. At the compound the *chigo* is able to impress Himegimi and her attendants with his poetic composition and skill at playing the biwa.

The second act of the tale opens by revealing that the *chigo* has now become Himegimi's closest attendant. Because the *chigo* had so earned the trust of Himegimi, her other ladies in waiting are able to attend to matters elsewhere on the compound, allowing the two to spend their time together largely alone. Seizing on the opportunity, the *chigo*, after many months serving the young woman, finally reveals himself. After a protracted period of courtship, Himegimi finally gives in and the two become intimate and fall deeply in love.

After some time passes, Himegimi becomes pregnant, which appears to others as though she is ill. Meanwhile, the *chigo's* master has become impatient, wanting the *chigo* to return to Mt. Hiei. The wet nurse, no longer able to dodge the abbot, finally tells the *chigo* that he must return. The *chigo*, not wanting to cause trouble for his wet nurse, decides to return to Enryakuji, but promises Himegimi that it will only be for several days. On his way back to Mt. Hiei, the *chigo* is kidnapped by goblins.

When the *chigo* never returns, the monks conclude that he has been kidnapped.

News spreads quickly, and reaches Himegimi. She believes that she is being punished for her infidelity to the crown prince and decides to depart her home. Deciding she that she cannot live with her guilt or without her beloved *chigo* she plans to end her life. Searching for a suitable spot to end her life, she becomes distracted when wandering around the mountains she chances upon a small dwelling. The dwelling belongs to an elderly female goblin who is also a Buddhist nun.

The goblin matron promises to take Himegimi in, but tells her that her sons are ferocious and that she has no control over them. Therefore, she tells Himegimi, the young woman must stay out of sight. Eventually the sons of the goblin nun return, carrying the *chigo* with them. They have cast a spell on him and he is rendered catatonic, fully unaware of his surroundings. Himegimi witness this, and watches as their mother tells the goblins that she will watch after the *chigo* whose master is frantically praying for him. Not wanting to draw the attention of the powerful monk, the sons agree.

The third and final act opens with the *chigo* still in his magically induced state of confusion. The goblin nun cures him using a potion, and he is reunited with Himegimi. They are overjoyed, and recount to one another the events since their parting. Hearing them, the goblin nun tells the two that she has been attempting to enter the Buddhist path by reciting the *Lotus Sutra*. She offers them her own life in exchange for their escape, asking the two to repay her only by giving her a Buddhist funeral. She tells them that her children are likely to kill her for letting them go, and tells them to be on the lookout for a murder of crows that will be the sign that she has passed away.

Meanwhile, the wet nurse, devastated at the loss of the *chigo* has shaven her head and become a wanderer. One night she finds herself in a makeshift dwelling praying for



the *chigo*, when suddenly the acolyte and Himegimi appear at her door. The three joyously reunite, convinced that the Buddhist path has facilitated their happy fates. At the same time, back at the compound, Himegimi's parents mourn for her. Figuring out what happened between Himegimi and the *chigo* they deduce that she too has been kidnapped by goblins. The father relays his suspicions to the abbot, who joins the family in praying for the safe return of the young couple.

The couple indeed witness a murder of crows as the goblin nun had predicted. As promised the *chigo* gives the goblin nun a true Buddhist funeral and memorial service. Himegimi then goes into labor, giving birth to a baby boy. Though the *chigo* is elated, Himegimi is concerned that the grief she has caused her parents will bring about a decline in the new family's good fortune.

The wet nurse relays the information to the abbot, who hastily goes with her to be reunited with his *chigo*. He notes to himself that his prayers had been effective, attributing the good fortune of the *chigo's* survival to his own prowess. The two men are overjoyed to see each other. The abbot also notes the young woman, and tells her parents that though he is not sure if she is indeed Himegimi, the circumstantial evidence would seem to suggest it is. The *chigo* changes out of his acolyte's clothing into that of an ordinary adult man so as not to be recognized by Himegimi's people, fearing that the coming reunion will make clear to Himegimi's parents the transgression the two had committed.

Contrary to his fears, all parties are simply relieved to find the two alive. Because of her protracted disappearance, the emperor has declared Himegimi dead, and so her father passes her off as a child of his concubine allowing the young couple to be properly

married. The *chigo* reveals that he is of Fujiwara descent, and is given a prestigious station in the father's compound. The tale concludes that the karma of both Himegimi and the *chigo* must have been great. It is also revealed through the *chigo's* dream that the goblin nun has reached enlightenment. The tale closes by telling us that the tale must be kept secret.

The tale provides several insights into the nature of sexuality and gender, and more specifically, the overlapping and contingent nature of these categories. Specifically, the *chigo's* fluid gender identity defies the degree to which we can reduce the nature of the *chigo's* symbolic and represented sexuality to his relationship with an abusive priest who deploys the mythologized image of the *chigo* as a means of rendering his real life sexual transgressions inert. Instead we are provided with a symbolic inscription that constitutes the *chigo's* gender and sexual identities on his own terms. This fluid sexuality is thus heavily informed by the *chigo's* ability to occupy multiple genders simultaneously, suggesting that as a narrative trope, we must understand how the tale deploys his image to navigate between these multivalent constructions of gender and sexuality. In the following, I give an analysis of the nature of gender fluidity as it is inscribed in Buddhist thought and tradition. By understanding how a broadly Buddhist discourse on gender fluidity undergirds the tale, it is possible to see how the story can be read to deploy such images. On the other hand, it will also be necessary to remain attentive to the androcentric bent of Buddhist discourses on gender. I will first begin with a brief description of these patriarchal discourses.

### ***Buddhist Constructions of Female Defilement***

Much of the medieval representation of women is informed by the logic of

impurity as it overlaps with an uneasy reception of death and blood that dates back to at least the Heian period. Some, including Faure, have theorized that as Buddhists began to increasingly offer ritual services to the aristocracy, they absorbed some degree of the court's beliefs that blood and death negatively impacted ritual purity, especially that of the emperor. Going back further to the Nikaya traditions, this is likely also why the *vinaya* contains roughly one hundred more precepts for nuns than for monks - that is, the holy space of the *sangha* must be protected from the female body's impurity. Whatever the case, the association of the female bodily functions of menstruation and childbirth with blood and death contributed in part to a notion that women were essentially polluted. This also comes into contact with the larger issue of karma as a foundational motif of Buddhist theology. That is, by placing menstruation and childbirth within the purview of intentional karmic action, Buddhists created an ideology of female impurity by debasing women's bodily *functions* as impure *acts* that overlapped with the ritual sphere. As Faure writes:

In making women responsible for the pollution of childbirth and menstrual blood, Buddhism was not only sexist, but it also undermined one its own defining principles: the belief in the individual responsibility of acts, which rests on intentional action. If menstruation is defiling, it is nonetheless involuntary and should bring no retribution. By emphasizing the sin of gender, Buddhism seems to return to earlier notions of ritual pollution, which it tries to legitimate by considering this female vice of form (or substance) as the effect of a karma that is both collective and individual<sup>47</sup>.

It is in making the female subject karmically responsible for the involuntary functions of the female body that women were understood as not just defiled, but deservingly so.

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<sup>47</sup> Bernard Faure, *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender*, Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Similarly, medieval Buddhists, or at least some, believed that the involuntary contraction of disease, especially *rai* (or Hansen's disease) was the result of karma. To this degree we might suggest that female bodily functions, and therefore the category of femininity in the abstract, were regarded as pathological.<sup>48</sup> On another level, the defiled, polluted, or impure aspects of women are essentially tied to the female body, but are also impure actions that threaten the purity of ritual space. There is a seeming contradiction, or at least a problem, here. Is it that the close association of the female body with blood makes it karmically defiled? Or is it that female bodies produce blood and other defilements because they are karmically defiled? It is, I think, the case that both are true. The tautological nature of the notion that women's monthly cycles of menstruation are defiling *and* are the products of defilement suggests the completeness of the view that women are impure. Additionally, such a rhetoric serves to gender the female body, conflating sex and gender by turning involuntary bodily function into intentional female action. Nevertheless it is important to note that not all Buddhists adhered to this view. Nichiren's case is a well-known exception<sup>49</sup>.

Until the the late 14th and early 15th centuries, Buddhists generally described femininity in terms of soteriological disadvantage or in terms that aligned more with gender than sex. What we see with these blood taboos, as Lori Meeks has pointed out, is that at a certain point, Buddhists began speaking of defilement in terms of sex, and not

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<sup>48</sup> See for example Andrew Goble's *Confluences of Medicine*, especially pages 79-118. Andrew Edmund Goble, *Confluences of medicine in medieval Japan: Buddhist healing, Chinese knowledge, Islamic formulas, and wounds of war*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Nichiren famously affirmed that menstruation was not an impediment to chanting the *daimoku*. This is especially articulated in his letters to his lay female followers. See Nichiren and Kyōtsū Hori, *St. Nichiren's Nyonin gosho: letters addressed to female followers*, Tokyo: Nichiren Shū Overseas Propagation Promotion Association, 1995.

socially, ritually, and culturally determined gender behavior<sup>50</sup>. The female body's association with blood, and therefore with the first Buddhist constructions of sex, are nowhere more pronounced than in the the *Ketsubonkyo* or *Blood Pond Sutra*.

Understanding practices and representations of female bodily functions centered around the *Ketsubonkyo* allows us to engage with the notion propagated in the past two to three decades by feminist scholars, beginning with Judith Butler, that it is not simply gender, but also sex, that is socially contingent<sup>51</sup>. The notion of female bodies as impure and defiled is one such example of how conceptions of sexed bodies are equally as value-laden and constructed as gender.

The apocryphal *Ketsubonkyo* is thought to have been compiled in China in the 12th century and transported to Japan by the early 13th century. It was not until the late medieval period that it was known by the Buddhist clergy in Japan. It is likely that it was not until the Tokugawa period that practices developed surrounding the sutra were widely disseminated to laypersons through Soto Zen funerary practices<sup>52</sup>. While no extant copy of the sutra exists today, the 1730 document *Nyonin Jobutsu Kentsubonkyo Engi* gives some indication of its contents. The reason for why someone might fall into the Blood Pond Hell are as follows: "All women fall into this hell because of their karma. This is because women have an eight-petaled lotus flower hanging upside down between their breasts that releases five colors of blood. The red colored blood flows out for seven days

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<sup>50</sup> See Lori Meeks, *Hokkeji and the reemergence of female monastic orders in premodern Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010.

<sup>51</sup> See Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>52</sup> For more on the use of the *ketsubonkyo* in its ritual context during the Tokugawa period, see Duncan Ryūken Williams, *The other side of Zen: a social history of Sōtō Zen: Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003. Especially pages 47-48.

every month or eighty-four days out of the twelve months. This blood is called menstrual blood (*gessui*) that is terribly evil and impure"<sup>53</sup>. It goes on to mention that this blood is so defiled that it can even threaten the purity of the deities of all realms, and that Mokuren (Skt. Maudgalyāyana, Chn. Mùlián), having discovered the existence of this hell, approached the historical Buddha himself, resulting in the writing of the sutra as a means of freeing women from rebirth within it. This description is then followed by a short narrative of how a young girl was possessed by the spirit of the nun Hosshō, the daughter of Hōjō Tokiyori, and was ultimately freed from the Blood Pond hell when the abbot of Hoshōji recited and recorded the sutra which was deposited in his temple. The girl while under possession describes the grisly realities of the hell, as well as adding the blood produced in child-birth to the list of female bodily functions that doom them to eternal suffering there. While this entire account is clearly a fabricated and fictionalized, it nevertheless is a clear articulation of the fact that female bodily functions and sex had, by the Tokugawa period, become part of a growing historical discourse that inscribed the bodies of women with karmic pollution. As Duncan Williams notes, the effect of incorporating the image of the Blood Pond hell into funerary practices simultaneously constructed a means for woman to reach the non-dual realization of enlightenment and salvation and served as the discursive anchor through which the female body was shown to be inferior to a man's. On another level, this construction of sex is by no means distinct from constructions of gender values, and rather, they should be understood as mutually inscribed.

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<sup>53</sup> Williams, *Other Side of Zen*, 2003, p. 125

### *Transforming Bodies and Gender*

So far we have described some ways in which Buddhists used the categories of karma, defilement, and blood to represent the female body as impure and defiled. As we have noted above, even within this tendency to represent women as karmically inferior, there is something of the fluid and non-dual logic of enlightenment that is characteristic of both the Mahayana stream of Buddhism in general and its Japanese schools in particular. In this section I hope to explicate how this non-dual logic works with respect to gender. This is most pronounced in the doctrines surrounding the transformation of bodies from one sex to another, specifically in the Pure Land tradition. As Rita Gross explains: “Amitabha vows that women who successfully use the method for gaining rebirth in the Pure Land will be reborn there as men. This form of Buddhism became immensely popular in Japan and the belief that the Pure Land would be free of female rebirth led to the practice of giving women male names during funeral ceremonies... This practice continued until very recently”<sup>54</sup>. Amongst the Amida Buddha’s other vows are that women will be “freed from the curse of menstruation” and that in the Pure Land they “are safe and unsullied from conception to birth”<sup>55</sup>. In analyzing this notion, as well as its historical sources, it will become clear that gender is broadly conceived of as fluid, or perhaps more accurately, ephemeral and not essential. However, this fluidity is not always positive, and especially as it concerns the possibility of rebirth in female form, is considered as largely undesirable.

Until very recently, it was thought that the idea that women would be reborn in

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<sup>54</sup> Rita M. Gross, *Buddhism After Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993, p. 66.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65

male bodies upon rebirth in the Pure Land was widely disseminated in the Heian and Kamakura periods through the *Tennyoshingyo* (Transforming Female Body Sutra) which outlines this belief in detail. Much of this theory centered on the presence of the sutra in courtiers' diaries. However, Nishiguchi Junko has shown that it was in fact the similarly titled *Tennyō Jobutsukyo* of which courtiers wrote<sup>56</sup>. It is likely then that the *Tennyoshingyo* was in fact not widely known by laypersons. However, as Lori Meeks notes, the Ritsu monk Soji attempted during the Kamakura period to popularize the *Tennyoshingyo*, though he had little success. The two texts, which have become conflated in historiography, are in fact quite distinct. While the *Tennyoshingyo* reflects a belief that male bodies must be acquired in order to reach salvation, the *Tennyō Jobutsukyo* does not appear to hold such beliefs. Nevertheless, the latter text does reflect androcentric views of gender proclivities, all of which describe the behavioral tendencies of women that bar them from rebirth, and tends to regard these gendered behaviors as what must be shed. It should be noted as well that the *Tennyō Jobutsukyo* does not deny that female bodies should be dispensed with, the alternative body not being male, but rather the body of a Buddha, which is genderless. As Sariputra asks of the historical Buddha in the text: "...what causes and conditions might cause a woman to speedily transform her female body and realize the unsurpassed way?"<sup>57</sup>.

What is perhaps most interesting however about the *Tennyō Jobutsukyo* is that while it does not describe a need to shed the female form, it gives a rare account of how one would be born into the body of a woman in the first place, and this is precisely by

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<sup>56</sup> See Nishiguchi's article, "*Tennyoshingyo to Tennyō Jobutsukyo*" in Oka Yoshiko. 2002. *Amadera monjo chosa no sika o kiban toshita Nihon no josei to Bukkyo no sogo kenkyu*. Kyoto: Kyowa Insatsu.

<sup>57</sup> Meeks, Hokkeji, 2010, p. 303



behaving in ways typically prescribed as female. As Sakyamuni answers Sariputra's early query in the text: "... The karma of breaking precepts, lacking faith, acting with indolence, being jealous, harboring pride, and holding erroneous views caused them to receive female bodies"<sup>58</sup>. I follow Meeks in understanding this as a list of "feminine vices" but I also wish to emphasize the mixing of cause and effect that we saw earlier with respect to sex. Here too female behavior is both the cause and the effect of karma, again signaling that it is not only female impurity at the level of sex, but female inferiority at the level of gender that is fully and tautologically circumscribed. This is, again, not to suggest a logical error, but serves, I believe, to illustrate the enclosure of femininity upon itself, and shows how women were inscribed as fully other with respect to gender. The further implication is that while a biologically male subject may never menstruate or give birth, he *could* himself possess the karma of a woman - that is, a man too can be jealous, misinformed, and break the precepts. I argue that this is one way in which the contingent nature of gender in general was dealt with by Buddhists - by relegating poor monastic, ritual, and religious conduct to female "nature" they cast it to the margin as a set of behaviors that not only women, but also men had to avoid. If indeed gender is merely a matter of "bad conduct" then it is not simply that a man could act as a woman, but in taking on gender behaviors as a cluster of karmic faults, he could *be* female.

Here then we see that while gender is represented as a contingent set of behaviors, it is not enough to recognize gender as ideologically formulated, or more specifically, the recognition that gender is not essential and inherent alone does not break beyond the

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 302

boundaries of androcentric and patriarchal discourse. The case of the *Tennyō Jobutsukyo* illustrates this fact well. The problem that androcentric discourses like this particular sutra presents is not the construction of gender, but the value-laden discourses that are grafted onto such constructions. Alternatively, as Meeks has eloquently illustrated in her study of Hokkeji, such beliefs did not always bar women from living fulfilling lives as Buddhists, and in fact shows that they may even at times have thrived, creating a Buddhism "on the ground" in which women and nuns were full participants.

The classic Mahayana sutras, the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* and the *Lotus Sutra*, contain more literal and immediate transformations of women into men, or men into women. In the "Goddess Chapter" of the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* Sariputra and the titular Goddess argue about the nature of enlightenment. When it becomes clear that Sariputra holds to worldly distinctions, especially that of gender division, illustrated in his belief that because of the Goddess' female form she is inferior in her salvation, she magically switches their bodies. The lesson that the Goddess imparts is as follows: "All women appear in the form of women in just the same way the elder appears in the form of a woman. While they are not women in reality, they appear in the form of women. With this in mind the Buddha said, 'in all things, there is neither male nor female'<sup>59</sup>.

The "Devadatta Chapter" of the *Lotus Sutra* also features Sariputra and his rigid views of gender. After discussing the merits of the *Lotus Sutra* amongst one another during an assembly of Arhats and Bodhisattvas, Manjushri notes that the young daughter of the dragon king had reached a level of spiritual focus that made her capable of reaching enlightenment upon reciting it. Though some are doubtful, she appears

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<sup>59</sup> Robert A. F. Thurman, *The holy teaching of Vimalakīrti: a Mahāyāna scripture*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976, p. 62

suddenly before the assembly. Sariputra is characteristically skeptical, again citing the girl's sex and gender as impediments. In response, she transforms into a man:

At that time the members of the assembly all saw the dragon girl in the space of an instant change into a man and carry out all the practices of a bodhisattva, immediately proceeding to the Spotless World of the south, taking a seat on a jeweled lotus, and attaining impartial and correct enlightenment. With the thirty-two features and the eighty characteristics, he expounded the wonderful Law for all living beings everywhere in the ten directions<sup>60</sup>.

Both of these episodes have a clear agenda of espousing the Mahayanist teachings, relegating Nikaya affiliated Sariputra to the role of curmudgeonly skeptic. However, the texts do not seem to be critical of Sariputra's belief in gender distinctions as such, but rather, of the fact that such a belief illustrates his attachments to any distinction whatsoever. To this degree the transformations are meant to illustrate the non-duality and fading of distinctions that is characteristic of Mahayana understandings of enlightenment. Or, in another way of putting it, enlightenment is genderless. While some have argued that such a view, especially in the case of the "Devadatta Chapter," shows that early Mahayana doctrine was egalitarian, this conceals the fact that the dragon girl must first shed her female body as a necessary prerequisite to attaining Buddhahood, masking this limitation in the language of the non-duality of salvation<sup>61</sup>.

In the case of the *Vimalakirti* episode, the transformation is bilateral, and given the fact that the Goddess is already enlightened despite her embodied subjectivity as a woman, it suggests the *Vimalakirti* sutra does not share the same vision of gender as the

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<sup>60</sup> Burton Watson and Kumārajīva, *The Lotus Sutra*, New York: Columbia University Press 1993, p. 188.

<sup>61</sup> Niwano, Nikkyō. 1976. *Buddhism for today: a modern interpretation of The threefold lotus sutra*. New York: Weatherhill.

*Lotus Sutra*. However, there is a more subtle issue here. As Terry Kawashima writes of discourses of genderlessness in enlightenment: "...the rhetoric of *ku*, or emptiness... appears to be an empowering concept for women since it obliterates the difference between men and women and yet ultimately allows the survival of the (male-dominant) status quo by rendering everything illusory so that any social change is futile"<sup>62</sup>. The larger issue is that doctrine and social reality do not always agree. Again, Meeks's analysis of *Hokkeji* illustrates the positive thrust of this gap between ideology and historical experience, but more often than not, this gap had the tendency of rendering the realities of embodied female experience meaningless, both in the Buddhistic sense of emptiness, but also in terms of denying the oppressive or limiting features of the realities of Buddhist life. Doctrine then cannot capture the entirety of how Buddhists actually lived, sometimes concealing oppression, but if pulled too far in the opposite direction, denying that living Buddhist women could lead enriching religious lives in the face of such oppressive discourses. For our purposes, it is nevertheless the case that such doctrinal constructions helped to inscribe and normalize representations of women in writing, whether religious or vernacular, that indeed constructed images of female inferiority.

We will now turn to *Torikaebaya Monogatari* and *Chigo Imamai*, keeping in mind these Buddhist constructions of gender and sex as guides for making sense of the complex systems of sexed, gendered, and sexualized identities that the characters of the tales exhibit.

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<sup>62</sup> Terry Kawashima, *Writing Margins: The Textual Construction of Gender in Heian and Kamakura Japan*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001, p. 17.

### ***Fluid Genders and Sexualities in Torikaebaya Monogatari and Chigo Imamai***

So far we have looked at a few of the ways that gender was understood in the medieval Buddhist imaginary. The first is that women are karmically defiled, and the second is that gender is a fluid category. This second understanding of gender has two further implications - it either signified the genderlessness of enlightenment, or, it further helped to inscribe the notion that occupying a female body was an undesirable prospect. When taken together, the notion of women as karmically defiled and the fluidity of gender and sex suggest that a man could become defiled in the form of a woman just as a woman could reach salvation in paradise as a man. Though a full discussion is beyond the scope of the present investigation, the theory that male bodies could be contaminated externally by sexual contact with women further implies that some aspects of gender were not viewed as self-contained, but rather were "contagious." The monastic injunction against contact with women was not in place simply because it was a threat to vows of celibacy: the primary reason for this injunction was the understanding that female defilements could spread to men. Thus female defilement, while specific to female bodies, could, through contact, become a man's own defilement<sup>63</sup>.

This has particular significance for our reading of *Chigo Imamai*. The *chigo's* transformation into a lady in waiting operates both at the symbolic level and at the level of gender as a fluid category, exemplified in transformations such as those in the *Lotus Sutra* and in the *Vimalakirti Sutra*. The *chigo's* transformation is less literal and embodied, but it is also a not a simple matter of a change in appearance. However briefly, the *chigo* is for all intents a purposes, a woman. It stands to reason then that if

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<sup>63</sup> See for example Faure, Bernard. 1998. *The red thread: Buddhist approaches to sexuality*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

the *chigo* depicts a broader understanding that acolytes were like women, than some of the androcentric discourse about female inferiority as Buddhist practitioners may have permeated the tales. This is perhaps nowhere more notable than in the fact that the *chigo* must first become a man to attain his happy ending. On the other hand, the *chigo's* gender fluidity might also turn some of these patriarchal assumptions on their head. For example, the characters possessing the greatest amount of salvific potential are either female, in the case of Himegimi and the goblin nun, or, in the case of the *chigo*, ambiguous and open to female characteristics.

Perhaps the greatest significance of the *chigo's* transformation is thus to underscore how the figure of *chigo* in general occupies a kind of liminal space of gender identity that allows for his transition to a lady in waiting in the first place. This fluid condition is notable in the *chigo's* ability to enact gendered expectations, such as his playing of the *biwa* and his ability to fully occupy the role and duty of a lady in waiting to the degree that he becomes Himegimi's best attendant. In other words, he is a better lady in waiting than her actual ladies in waiting. In the tale itself, Himegimi's observations about the *chigo/lady* in waiting's body as "skinny" and "child-like" also suggest that some aspect of the *chigo's* embodied identity facilitates the boy's ability to seamlessly occupy the role of a woman. On the one hand it is possible to see how this kind of genderlessness is easily seized upon to manipulate the *chigo's* radical plasticity as a means of rendering the acolyte however an author might so choose. On the other, this fluid gender and sexual identity is the *chigo's* own, at least as it is represented in the tale itself. To this degree, it is crucial to allow this fluidity to retain its symbolic significance, exploring it without reducing it to how the tales could be utilized to justify all matter of

transgressions.

Another way to resist reduction to the intentions and agendas of the tales' hypothetical authors is to read the *chigo monogatari* alongside a non-Buddhist text. To this end, I will turn now to the secular court tale, *Torikaebaya monogatari*. The gender reversed brother and sister of the tale provide one strong example of how fluidities of gendered, sexed, and sexualized identities may have been understood in premodern Japan outside of the Buddhist monastery. Additionally, it is a useful site for challenging some of the normative scholarly, medical, and scientific constructs of gender and sexuality in Western discourse. To this end, I will lean on Pflugfelder's analysis of these constructions in his essay, *Strange Fates*. I believe that while not comprehensive, Pflugfelder's alternative categorizations apply well to the fluid boundaries that chigo are seen to move amongst. Finally, by comparing some of the motifs in a court narrative with a "Buddhist" one, I hope to show that chigo monogatari cannot be reduced to the intentions of its Buddhist authors.

### ***Torikaebaya's Systems of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality***

The Heian era court tale *Torikaebaya* follows the lives of the son and daughter of Sadaijin from childhood. At first, the children are described as exceedingly beautiful, and as nearly identical: "Both children had exquisite features and could be easily mistaken for one another"<sup>64</sup>. But gradually, this androgyny gives way as the children become old enough to display individual characteristics, and their father notices that their gender identities appear to be reversed.

It is at this point that the socially determined expectations of their gendered

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<sup>64</sup> Rosette Friedman Willig, *A study and translation of the Torikaebaya Monogatari*. Thesis--University of Pennsylvania 1978, p. 14.

proclivities begin to deviate from their sexed bodies. The text first describes the son's feminine personality traits and preferences: "...the boy became surprisingly shy... his father put him to the study of letters and taught him appropriate subjects, but the boy, in his embarrassment, could not concentrate his attention on any of them. Always behind curtains, he painted, played with dolls, and was absorbed in such games as matching seashells"<sup>65</sup>. This description not only displays the behavioral norms that were expected of the genders, but also describes expectations about feminine space - the young boy is always behind a curtain which traditionally served to separate women from men during visitations. The young boy is also described as in the company of ladies in waiting, separating himself from men to the point that he is even embarrassed to be in the presence of his father.

The daughter is described in nearly opposite terms. She enjoys being outdoors, is always surrounded by male attendants, is mischievous and socially personable, and, unlike her brother, is quite skilled at writing Chinese characters. Interestingly, she seems more aware of the expectations that her father has of her, being able to "[restrain]...her unladylike behavior" in his presence, while the son is constantly bursting into tears around him, unable to conceal his feminine proclivity towards shyness<sup>66</sup>. Because the daughter with her male preferences is outdoors or in public spaces, she is more visible to outsiders. It is perhaps largely because the daughter is more engaged with her social surroundings that she becomes increasingly aware that her preferences contrast with the expectations that her sexed body typically signify.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 14

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 15



While the opening part of the narrative briefly gives us an overview of the children's gendered preferences through the eyes of their father, there is a quick shift to more internalized reflections on the situation from the children's point of view. The shift of vantage point signals that it is no longer a boyish girl and a girlish boy that are depicted, but rather, that each child has become fully identified with the gender that contrasts with their sexed bodies. This is signaled textually by the narrator's aside: "Hereafter I shall refer to the children as the others had come to mistakenly do; the son I shall call the daughter, and the daughter the son"<sup>67</sup>. The transition marks a shift from gender as configured by "personal disposition" as Pflugfelder calls it, to gender configured by "socialization." At this point, the genders of the children are no longer solely contingent on what they themselves prefer, but they must now live as the genders that the outside world perceives them to be. This is most evident in the narrative when the children's reputations for extraordinary beauty and skill draw the attention of the Emperor and Prince. Giving into the pressure, despite his fear that their "situation" would be discovered, Sadaijin finally agrees to present them at court.

Sadaijin having acquiesced to present his children begrudgingly prepares their coming of age ceremonies. Fascinatingly, when they partake in the coming of age rituals for boys and girls, each participates in the ritual that accords to his/her gender and not his/her sex. In effect, they are ritually and socially made into the gender with which they identify. Historians have noted that the *genpuku* ritual for boys and the *mogi* ceremony for girls involved the children changing out of their clothes into adult outfits, as well as cutting their hair to match adult hairstyles for men and women. Until the performance of

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 16

the ceremonies, children's hairstyles are androgynous and nondescript, only becoming styled in ways that would signify gender identity after the ceremony. During the ceremony for his son, now officially his daughter, the girl's grandfather ties the sash to her kimono, identifying it clearly as the *mogi* ceremony<sup>68</sup>. The now ritually and socially recognized son's ceremony is described in less detail, but he is described as looking "quite different" suggesting that his androgynous appearance has taken on more recognizably masculine characteristics<sup>69</sup>. We see then that garments played a significant role in socially understood parameters of gender identity - that the children are given the ceremonies in accord with their genders and not their sex does not simply translate to "cross-dressing" or even "transvestism" through which gender roles are not necessarily performed - but in the coming of age ceremony, the transition from androgynous, nigh genderless childhood to gendered adulthood is performatively and ritually enacted by the donning of gender marking clothing. We will return to this issue later in our analysis of *Chigo imamaiiri*. To look ahead however, it is crucial to note that a similar understanding may have pertained to what appears to be the common practice of dressing *chigo* in ways that marked him as female. For the moment we will continue to focus on what appears to be *Torikaebaya's* general view that gender is performative and does not always overlap or coincide with sex.

Pflugfelder is careful to note that throughout the narrative gender constructs are not acknowledged by the characters or the narrator. This is the case, of course, because a premodern Japanese author would not have been familiar with such discourses. It is

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<sup>68</sup> See for Nakamura, Yoshio. 1962. *Ōcho no fūzoku to bungaku*. Tōkyō: Hanawa Shobō

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22

however the case that the children's situation is deemed "strange": "This sense [of strangeness] is conveyed in the term *yozukazu* (literally, 'not adhering to the ways of the world'), which recurs throughout the text, and similar phrases such as *yo ni nizu*, *hito ni tagau*, and *rei nashi*"<sup>70</sup>. According to Pflugfelder, the major thrust of such formulations is to point out that the children do not conform to normative gender behaviors, but tend to refrain from overt judgement of the situation, positing their situation in "analytic terms"<sup>71</sup>. It is therefore impossible to determine the degree to which the *Torikaebaya*'s views of gender fluidity reflect the broader perceptions of the moral or ethical reception of such fluidities. Picking up and explicating on one of Pflugfelder's analytical threads however, I do believe that the text does reflect some of the ethical judgments and the idealized norms of Buddhist gender categorizations.

As Pflugfelder notes, gender identity appears to reflect to some degree notions of "fate" which are inflected with Buddhist language. This is seen most clearly in the dream Sadaijin has halfway through the tale:

In previous lives their paths were crossed, and in retribution a goblin changed the boy into a girl, and the girl into a boy, and caused you no end of sorrow. A very long time passed for the goblin, and as a result of your having entered on the path of the Buddha and having many prayers said as the years have gone by, the situation has been completely remedied. The man will be man and the woman a woman, and they will be made to prosper as you wish them to. The mental anguish you suffer is but a small part of the retribution from former lives<sup>72</sup>.

Two points are notable in this dream narrative. The first is that the "situation" has been

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<sup>70</sup> Pflugfelder, *Strange Fates*, 1993, p. 351

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351

<sup>72</sup> Willig, *Torikaebaya*, 1978, p. 353

corrected, which is also crucial to the narrative arc of the story in which both the son and daughter revert to their respective genders. As I have highlighted in the previous discussion on Buddhist categories of gender, the idea that men could become women and that women could become men is reflective of a simultaneous recognition that gender is behavioral and socially determined, as well as the historically constructed idea of the female body, her sex, as karmically defiled. If, as Pflugfelder notes, gender is not a permanent state in *Torikaebaya's* system of sex/gender, evidenced by the siblings' reversion to their "original" genders, it might have equally been the case that men believed that they might slide back down the soteriological hierarchy into the form of women. Secondly, the siblings' situation is attributed to the father's transgressions. The reversal of genders in relation to sexed bodies is described as the retribution, though their own actions also play a role in this Karmic fate as well. In addition, as Pflugfelder notes, the situation is mutual and works both ways, that is, a man becomes a woman and vice versa, therefore displaying a less hierarchal view in comparison to Buddhism's. Yet, when we look at the daughter's lamentation upon re-entering her feminine subject standpoint, we see something of the androcentric rhetoric regarding female bodies: "How wretched it is to have become the woman I am now. Even the Buddha claimed woman is sinful"<sup>73</sup>. Additionally she wonders if her new found femininity is "retribution" for having deceived her wife Yon no Kimi about her sex/gender, and for having treated her poorly while she was her husband. In contrast, having become a man again, the son reflects that "... [there is] no reason I should have to stay indoors like the woman as

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 143

before"<sup>74</sup>. While the daughter considers her reversion a punishment, the son makes no such lament, in fact appearing to suffer no psychological consequence, only regarding his previous feminine proclivity to remain indoors as useless to him now that he is a man. We might be able to reconcile these differing responses to their respective returns to their genders by drawing out the daughter's Buddhist interpretation of the situation, that being a woman is a "sin." This is further punctuated by the fact that she is not necessarily lamenting her gender identity in itself, but rather, is lamenting the re-convergence of her gender with her sexed body. After being discovered as a biological woman, then raped and impregnated by Saisho, the daughter is confronted by her body. First, Saisho's discovery of her female genitalia causes him to demand she return to being a woman, deciding to pursue her in the manner a man would typically court a woman. In addition, and perhaps most decisively, it is her pregnant body that finally makes her unable to reconcile her gender and sex. Ultimately, it is her pregnancy, the function of a specifically female body, that she laments as retribution. At least symbolically then, her reversion to the female gender is a kind of "rebirth" into the body of a woman. In fact, it is not until she has given birth to her own children that she officially unveils herself as a woman, in some sense also giving birth to her own normatively configured and expected agreement of gender and sex.

Finally, the story reflects a complicated overlapping and interweaving of gender/sex with sexuality. Pflugfelder's important suggestion that homosexuality does not apply to premodern and non-Western systems of sexuality is especially pronounced in this tale. One major complication with the broad category of homosexuality is that it is

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 355

unclear whether homosexuality refers to same sex or same gender relations. As Pflugfelder writes: "If 'homosexuality' is taken to mean sexual relations between two males/men or two females/women, each cognizant of the other's sex and gender, then 'homosexuality' does not exist in the world of *Torikaebaya*"<sup>75</sup>. As he is also keen to point out, the tale contains same-gender and same-sex relations and desires, which are also at times cross-gender/cross-sex depending on a partner's cognizance of the siblings' identities at the time. That Saisho for example is sexually attracted to the daughter as both Chunagon and as a woman reflects multiple sexualities that are never fully identified in one way or another. The daughter's relationships with Saisho (as both a man and woman), Shi no Kimi, and a host of other women including the older Yoshino princess, as well as the son's relationship with the crown princess, reflects this spectrum of sexualities. What is most crucial for this analysis is that these sexualities, which tend to be fixed to concrete sex and gender identities in the Western world, are not so in the case of *Torikaebaya*, and, as we will see, *Chigo imamai*.

### ***Chigo Imamai's Systems of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality***

As Schmidt-Hori emphasizes, *Chigo imamai* portrays a fluid spectrum of gender and sexual identities. Unlike *Torikaebaya* however, the locus of these identities is largely inscribed in one character, the *chigo*/lady in waiting. With him/her as the focal point, the abbot and the *chigo's* relationship centers around male-male desire, and the *chigo's* relationship with Himegimi depicts male-female desire. While in the role of Himegimi's lady in waiting, the *chigo's* desire is female-female. In terms of gender, the tales' system is far less complex than the one depicted in *Torikaebaya*, with the *chigo* the only

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<sup>75</sup> Pflugfelder, *Strange Fates*, 1993, p. 361

character to shift between gender roles. From the standpoint of normative moral or ethical expectations, the tale does not appear to condemn the *chigo's* fluid gender identity, nor does it appear to pass judgement on the status of women. In fact Schmidt-Hori largely derives her argument that the author of the tale may have been a woman from the presence of positively depicted female characters. Similarly, Schmidt-Hori argues that the fact that Buddhist themes, impermanence in particular, are less present in this tale than the rest of the *chigo monogatari* tradition suggests that the author is also a layperson. Both of these hypotheses are concerned with showing that not all *chigo monogatari* served the role of validating and endorsing pederastic male-male sexuality in the monastery.

Above, I argued that such a view is reductive both in the sense that it limits the possible range of all other *chigo monogatari* to such a maneuver, and in that it overdetermines the intentionality of this supposed lay female author in structuring how the *chigo imamai* should be read. I will further argue that though it is perhaps impossible to deny that the intention of a writer is part of the semantic universe that constitutes a textual system of meaning, nevertheless a text can and does signify meanings beyond authorial intent. This is hardly a unique argument; a cursory survey of literary theory from the 1980's until the late 1990's will attest to the prevalence of such a reading by post-structuralists and deconstructionists, and even further back in the 1940's and 1950's by New Criticism. But as we have shown in Chapter one, such principles of reading have rarely been applied to the *chigo monogatari*; instead they are largely read along two possible lines of interpretation: as reflective of what Buddhists would have intended them to mean, or of the social realities that underpin the

ideology of the textual system . Again, these approaches have successfully uncovered *some* of the *chigo monogatari's* meaningfulness, but not *all* of it.

In the case of *Chigo imamai*, what go unread by Schmidt-Hori, and are admittedly also largely unstated in the narrative itself, are precisely the implications of gender fluidity as we have described them above. *Torikaebaya* and a variety of scriptural and vernacular Buddhist sources reflect the idea that while gender is permeable, it is always better to go from woman to man than from man to woman. I will suggest that while the text of *Chigo imamai* does not necessarily reflect this view explicitly, neither does it, as Schmidt-Hori's view suggests, actively resist it merely by failing to include "weak women." First, however, it is necessary to show how the *chigo's* transformation into the lady in waiting occurs.

The *chigo* is brought along by his master, the abbot of Mt. Hiei, when Himegimi's father, the Minister of the Left, calls upon him to provide ritual cleansing for the ill Himegimi after all other conventional methods have been exhausted. When the *chigo* first sees Himegimi, he is immediately smitten with her. Much of the stock language and motifs of other *chigo monogatari* as well as Heian court literature is utilized, including the familiar motif of the unrequited love causing bodily illness. Realizing that Himegimi is unattainable, both because she has been promised to wed another and because of the gap in their social status, the *chigo* becomes forlorn, himself falling ill. After the abbot seemingly cures Himegimi of her illness, in an attempt to recuperate, he departs to the home of his former wetnurse in Uji, rather than return to Mt. Hiei with his master. It is there that the caring and attentive wetnurse realizes that the *chigo* has fallen in love and is not really ill at all. She hatches a plan to dress the *chigo* as a lady in waiting in order to



sneak him into the Minister of the Left's home so that he might attempt to make Himegimi notice him. The narrative describes the transformation as follows:

After the wetnurse dressed the *chigo* in silk *hakama*, he looked exactly like an elegant, exquisite lady-in-waiting. Delighted, she escorted him to the minister's mansion in a carriage. Inside the mansion, the lamps were beautifully lit, and the ladies-in-waiting came out to see the new girl, who appeared to be in her late teens. Her refined, fresh youthful beauty was extremely appealing, and her hairstyle, eyebrows, and forehead, among other things, far surpassed expectations"<sup>76</sup>.

This transformation is not simply of one social role to another, nor is it simply an external change, but is rather a crossing of gender boundaries. As I mentioned with respect to the siblings in *Torikaebaya*, the coming of age ceremony in which a child first dons the gendered clothing of an adult is also the moment in which they first become gendered. While there is no *mogi* ceremony here, such ceremonies attest to the efficacy of clothes in constructing gender norms. More overt similarities with *Torikaebaya* are also present, particularly the seclusion of the protagonists at Uji, after which they re-emerge with a new gender, with the daughter's case in *Torikaebaya* being her return to femininity. This moment too, as Pflugfelder has noted, is largely contingent on the daughter redressing herself as a woman - blackening her teeth and imbibing a formula to rapidly regrow her hair. Historically, *chigo's* gender identities were also manipulated by the use of clothes. As Leupp writes: "We cannot explain the monk-*chigo* relationship as solely the result of 'situational' sexual behavior... But surely, many men who would otherwise have sought sex with females practiced it with boys in their absence. Heterosexual desire was evident in the construction of sexual objects made up, coiffured,

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<sup>76</sup> Schimdt-Hori, *The New Lady In Waiting*, p. 397

and dressed much like women”<sup>77</sup>. Of course it is important to note that Leupp's historical study lacks a degree of theoretical nuance and he problematically reduces the manipulation of the *chigo's* clothing and makeup to reflections of heterosexual desire, and not a blending of gender boundaries. Nevertheless, clothing and hairstyle have also played a role in iconographic depictions of *chigo* in which they appear with long hair in ponytails, or, on special occasions, with a feminine hairstyle in which the hair is parted down the middle and into two looping braids at the side of the head. Similarly, during festivals at temples, the *chigo* were dressed in extravagant costumes that more befitted women, leading some art historians like Kuroda Hideo to conclude that it was likely fairly common practice, at least during public functions, for *chigo* to look like women.

A more promising analysis of this phenomenon can be noted in Hashidate Ayako's recent study<sup>78</sup>. She argues that the *chigo's* gender cannot be exhausted by modern categorizations of male/female, but must rather be understood on its own terms. Most interestingly, Hashidate argues that because of the closed nature of the monastery, it was the monks, more than society at large that constructed this particular gender identity. There were two streams from which these monks drew. The first was the socially constructed expectations of gender and the second was the rhetoric of divine childhood. The latter notion is perhaps most frequently seen in the form of the common Japanese phrase phrase "七つまでは神のもの - *nanatsu made wa kami no mono*" or "until the age of seven, [children] belong to the gods." or "until the age of seven, [children] belong to the gods." Hashidate shows that monks seized upon this discourse to construct parallel

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<sup>77</sup> Gary P. Leupp, *Male colors: the construction of homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, p. 56.

<sup>78</sup> Hashidate Ayako, *Chigo no Sei*, *Essays and Studies* 60(2), 49-78. 2010-03. Kyoto Joshi Daigaku.

but somewhat contrasting notions that as children, *chigo* were godlike and genderless, but also, were subhuman or transhuman (人ならざる者 - *hito narazaru mono*). The *chigo's* inhuman sacredness or, “*sei*” (聖) overlapped with their genderless and ambiguous identities, allowing monks to fill in the gap with more socialized and externalized expectations of gender, such as the clothing and makeup of a woman. Alternatively, the makeup, hairstyles, and clothing in which monks dressed their acolytes was not meant to signify femininity, but to accentuate the *chigo's* godlike or inhuman status with traditional markers of beauty, all of which happened to be markers of femininity borrowed from aristocratic standards of beauty. Hashidate concludes that this monastic construction was one in which gender and sacredness overlapped such that the *chigo's* gender identity is indeterminable, but also plastic and receptive to manipulation.

Perhaps then it is this notion of sacredness, beauty, and inhumanity that made *chigo* into a figure so easily apotheosized into Kannon, Monju Bosatsu, and other bodhisattvas. At the same time, this very same ambiguity of gender and sacredness, as reflected in culturally signified norms of beauty at the external level, is also what allowed monks to transform children into something like a woman. It is therefore suggestive that unlike the famous moments in *Aki no Yonaga Monogatari* and *Genmu monogatari*, in which the dead *chigo* returns as Kannon, the *chigo* in *Chigo imamai* also transforms, but here, into a woman. There are some moments that obliquely attest to the *chigo's* androgyny, for example, when the acolyte dresses as a man because he is concerned that after his second departure from the mansion, those living there will surely recognize him as the lady in waiting. That is to say, when he dons masculine attire he transcends the ambiguity that exists between female and *chigo*. The *chigo's* own attire is therefore not

the clothing of a man, but neither, as indicated by his disguising himself as a lady in waiting, is it the clothing of female. It is a *chigo's* clothes, attire that signifies what Hashidate calls his sacred-gender or *sei-sei* (聖性), or conversely his inhumanity. This is the reason that Schmidt-Hori is correct in calling the *chigo's* transformation a "dual tranvestism," which is to say that the *chigo* appears in the story with at least *three* genders. These three genders also overlap with his sexuality, making it perhaps incorrect to call his relationship with the abbot male-male love, but rather it might be called 聖性-male love. Even his relationship with Himegimi might be better characterized as 聖性-female love. When he finally becomes the son in law of the Minister of Left and announces himself as a descendant of the Fujiwara, he finally becomes a man, and here he is depicted in a male-female relationship. Perhaps it is only during his time as a lady in waiting that he displays any kind of same-gender sexual desire, but ultimately as Himegimi is aware that he is in fact a *chigo*, there is only cross-gender sexuality in the tale. The monk and the *chigo's* relationship however can, if we do consider the *chigo* to be male, be characterized as same-sex sexuality. We see then that the *chigo's* overlapping gender and sexual identities do not readily lend themselves to our modern categorizations.

On another level, the *chigo's* perceived sacredness, which scholars like Atkins and Faure have argued constitutes the backbone of the rhetoric of concealment, hiding sexual violence within the language of soteriology and transformation into bodhisattvas, is also the very same source of the *chigo's* ability to become a lady in waiting. If this is the case, then it is likely that *chigo* could be perceived to possess some of the deficiencies of women. After all, just as the dragon girl must become a man to reach salvation, so too

must the *chigo* very often shed his ambiguous body and become a bodhisattva before he is saved. It is only after he sheds his status as a *chigo* and a lady in waiting and becomes male that he is given his happy, prosperous ending. Here then, in the *chigo's* transformation into a female, another thread of representations, the language of defilement and uneven gender fluidity, is, if not explicitly, then covertly hidden within the language of young love, and also, as we see with the goblin nun's salvation, the non-duality of enlightenment. If this is true, then as one representative of *chigo monogatari* as a whole, *Chigo imamai* cannot be reduced to the agenda of the monks Faure and Atkins wish to expose.

### ***Conclusion***

I have attempted to restrict my analysis to the ways in which the presence of Buddhist discourses of gender, sex, and sexuality in both *Chigo imamai*, and to a lesser extent, *Torikaebaya monogatari*, suggests a fluid, albeit androcentric, notion of women, *chigo*, and a wide range of sexual relationships that is irreducible to Western sexual identities like homosexuality. This becomes especially pronounced when we regard the *chigo's* own gender identity as a kind of third gender, that of the sacred sex, further complicating the degree to which it is possible to map the *chigo's* sexuality onto neatly defined gender categories and conceptions of sexed bodies.

Nevertheless, it is also possible to see how this third gender sometimes follows patterns of feminization, and to this degree, the acolyte's realignment of his gender and sexed body in *Chigo imamai* might be understood as a re-masculinizing of his identity. If this is the case, it is not hard to imagine how monks may have deployed the image of the *chigo's* shift away from his own sacred gender, into a lady-in-waiting, and finally into

adult manhood as a means for validating sexual relationships with young *chigo*. The monk's role in the relationship could indeed have been rationalized as "raising" the child acolyte into masculine adulthood. To this end, we have not fully contested the degree to which patterns in these tales point back to the meaning of the *chigo monogatari* as apologia for monkly subjugation of the acolytes forced into sexual relations. We have attempted instead to raise doubt about the persistent understanding that the tales are primarily concerned with male-male relationships, *nanshoku*, and in the case of some formulations, homosexuality.

In order to challenge and read against the grain of an equally totalizing interpretation that reduces the tales to the way in which historical monks deployed them, another avenue for reading is necessary. To this end I turn in the following chapter to motifs of childhood, especially the notion of the child's simultaneous sacredness and inhumanity, and the equivalence of monk-disciple relationships to filial father-son relations, in order to understand how the tales depict a kind of inversion of the power balance between the *chigo* and monk through an elevation of the *chigo* to the status of ideal Buddhist practitioner.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE *CHIGO'S* SONHOOD

One way in which Buddhists came to regard themselves *as* Buddhists was through a highly symbolic and metaphorical equivalence of Buddhist self-identity and practice to childhood, a term I understand here as determined not by chronological age, but in terms of a child's positioning with respect to his or her parents<sup>79</sup>. This gradual identification of childhood and Buddhist identity took on many forms over the course of Buddhist doctrinal history. This tendency to understand childhood as an ideal of Buddhism became especially pronounced in Japan and China as pre-existing norms of filial piety became incorporated into Buddhist rhetoric. Nevertheless, as Reiko Ohnuma has shown, ideals of childhood were no less important in the Indian context<sup>80</sup>.

One way in which ideal childhood was described in Buddhist doctrine was through a putative equivalence between the father-son relationship and the master-disciple relationship. To this degree, a more particular strand of ideal childhood, that of exemplary Buddhist sonhood, is traceable in Buddhist doctrinal history. The parable of the father who saves his children from a burning house and the image of the prodigal son in back to back chapters of the *Lotus Sutra* configures this equivalence between fathers and sons to masters and disciples through the ultimate image of discipleship - the Buddhists reverence to his spiritual master, Sakyamuni himself. This symbolic proximity is further deployed and ritualized in Chinese Chan monasteries in images of lineage,

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<sup>79</sup> For a broader treatment of the theme of Buddhism and childhood, a top gaining traction in the past 5 years, see Sasson, Vanessa R. *Little Buddhas: Children and Childhoods in Buddhist Texts and Tradition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>80</sup> Ohnuma, Reiko, *Ties That Bind: Maternal Imagery and Discourse in Indian Buddhism*, Oxford [England: Oxford University Press, 2012.

imagined as the transmission of enlightenment through an unbroken line of all male descendants that includes the Buddha, and in funerary customs where the disciple embodies the role of *xiaozi* or filial son to his master-father. Both of these examples set up sonhood as a symbol for Buddhist self identification in general - to be a Buddhist is to be a son, both to one's master and to the historical Buddha himself.

On another level, I hope to show how over time ideal childhood became conflated with the broader Mahayanist principle of extending salvation to others over and against oneself. This conflation is notable in two configurations; the first is in the image of the child who must save his mother from *samsara*, and the second is in the equivalence between childhood and bodhisattva-hood. In both cases, the child becomes understood as a potent Buddhist practitioner who embodies many of the highest principles of Mahayana Buddhist rhetoric. This strand of child related images and practices cuts across various parent child relations, but ultimately comes to rest on the mother-son relationship. Nevertheless, while these motifs are mostly circumscribed with respect to mother-son relationships in doctrine, they also provide the general parameters for the proper filial obligation any child owes his parents.

These images of the ideal child are helpful in our ongoing attempt to read *chigo monogatari* both against the grain of scholarly consensus and also against a view that historical and social realities supersede the significance of literary value. Using the image of ideal childhood and sonhood as a guide for orienting my readings of *chigo monogatari*, I hope to reread and rethink the apotheosis of *chigo* in these tales. This maneuver of rendering the *chigo* into a vessel for bodhisattvas has been seized upon by scholars like Atkins and Faure as the most dehumanizing moment for *chigo*, becoming



the ultimate means of concealing the realities of sexual abuse through a mythologizing and euphemizing discourse. The seeming sacralization of the *chigo* is turned upside down by Atkins and Faure to show that it was in fact in describing *chigo* as demigod like beings that monks were able to justify their sexual misconduct against acolytes. As Atkins understands the all too common tragic fate of the *chigo* in the tales, the tendency to kill off *chigo* or to subject them to other violent acts including kidnapping, was retroactively validated by their being sacred, and therefore non-human beings. As he puts it: "The loss of these adolescents is not truly tragic because they were not really human, and their deaths were instruments in grander plans to bring the monks who loved them (or thought they loved them) to experience enlightenment"<sup>81</sup>.

If however we are able to show that *chigo* were son-like figures, we may be able to read their apotheosis, at least to a certain degree, at face value. That is, in seeing how a *chigo* both embodies the symbolic equivalence of father-son relations to master-disciple relationships, and also certain Buddhist expectations that children should work to save their parents, their tendency to be described as liminal figures capable of becoming bodhisattvas takes on a new significance. The *chigo* embodies the broader Mahayanist belief that ideal Buddhist practice lies in first and foremost extending salvation to others over and against oneself. If we restrict our analysis to how the *chigo's* embodiment of these ideals operates at the symbolic level, both in terms of the narrative logic of the text itself, and also, in Buddhist symbolism and imagery, then the apotheosis of the *chigo* can be read not as a means of dehumanizing the *chigo*, but of describing them as ideal Buddhist practitioners over and against Buddhist monks. Within the texts themselves,

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<sup>81</sup> Paul S Atkins, "Chigo in the Medieval Japanese Imagination." *The Journal of Asian Studies*. 67.3 (2008): 955.

their ability to save the monks is just that; their extension of enlightenment to monks is not reducible to how the image of salvation was turned against the *chigo* by historical Buddhist monks, but rather, cements the fact that the *chigo* has a special potency that allows him to save others.

In the *Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari*, the *chigo* can arguably be read to occupy a role akin to the ideal Buddhist child, and by extension, the ideal Buddhist practitioner. I read the *chigo's* son-like position in the narrative to thus bestow him with the power to save his lover Keikai, who is also a stand in for his father. However, it is necessary to clarify how the first cluster of images, the disciple who is like a son to his master, and the second, the child who saves his mother, are distinct, though interrelated conceptions. It is first of all the case that episodes depicting a son saving his father are nearly non-existent in extant Buddhist literature. It would appear that in Buddhist doctrine, there is no expectation, at least insofar as it is not depicted, for a son to extend his salvific prowess to his father. For the most part in fact, fathers are regarded as those who save their sons. I therefore do not wish to simply graft the image of the son who saves his mother to the symbolic master-disciple/father-son relationship

If however, we can successfully show how the *chigo* is like Keikai's son through the symbolic equivalence of masters and disciples to fathers and sons, then *chigo monogatari* can be read as providing an alternative formulation of childhood in which the son is now able to save his father, much as the ideal son saves his mother in doctrine. To this degree the story inverts the power balance between the *chigo* and monk on two levels, first in the inversion of the putative father-son relation in which the son is now able to save his father, and secondly, in the imbalance of power identified by Faure and

Atkins between *chigo* and monk in which the acolyte is subjected to dehumanizing gestures that validate monkly sexual abuse. Furthermore, the *chigo monogatari* also might be seen to provide a platform for religious insights that extend beyond those provided by canonical Buddhist literature, showing that a paternal figure is in as much need of their son-like disciple's intercession as a biological mother has for her biological son. Within the *chigo monogatari* sons *qua chigo* can save their masters *qua* fathers, a maneuver that appears to be largely absent in Buddhist doctrine.

If such an interpretation is possible, than it will also be the case that the monk-*chigo* relation will be readable in a way that can recuperate the tales. The scholarly tendency to subordinate the tales to historical realities of sexual abuse preclude an interpretation in which the tales can be read as over-turning the historical power balance through a symbolic inversion that shifts the fates of the *chigo* and monk: while in the historical medieval Japanese monastery, the monk controls the destiny of the *chigo*, on the pages of the *chigo monogatari*, the *chigo* holds the fate of the monk within his hands.

### ***Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari***

I will begin by summarizing the *Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari*<sup>82</sup>. In order to understand how the motifs of ideal childhood are readable in the *chigo monogatari* tradition, it is necessary to frame my historical and doctrinal analysis alongside the tale.

The tale follows Keikai, a monk of Mt. Hiei and the Enryakuji complex. He has a dream in which he sees a beautiful young man, whose image Kekai becomes infatuated with. Later, Keikai encounters the same boy from his dream who turns out to be a *chigo* attached to Onjoji, a rival temple of Enryakuji. The two are able to meet via a

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<sup>82</sup> For a full translation, see Childs, Margaret H. "Chigo Monogatari. Love Stories or Buddhist Sermons?" *Monumenta Nipponica*. 35.2 (1980): 132-151.

clandestine correspondence that Keikai sets up through his servant. They spend the night together, consummating their relationship, though the text's detailing of the night is sparse. However, the description of how Keikai's "sleeve had absorbed the fragrance that the youth had worn," and which Keikai regarded as a "memento" is clear enough, and recalls similar tropes regarding lovers parting after a night together in the tradition of Heian court romances<sup>83</sup>. After parting, Keikai falls ill, presumably because of his heartache caused by the distance between himself and the boy. The boy leaves Onjoji for Enryakuji upon hearing that Keikai was unwell, failing to secure permission nor notifying anyone, and is kidnapped by goblins on his way. When the monks at Onjoji realize that the boy is missing, they deduce Keikai must have kidnapped him. They also conclude that he must have gotten his father's permission, and thus destroy his childhood home. Regarding Keikai's presumed kidnapping of the boy as "the worst possible insult", the monks decide to "construct a *sanmaya* ordination platform" in retaliation<sup>84</sup>. As the Enryakuji monks believed that they should hold exclusive rites for ordaining Tendai clergy, they become incensed, arming themselves, and subsequently destroying Onjoji. Keikai is also involved in the attack.

Meanwhile, the young boy is held captive in the cave by the goblins. He shortly discovers that another prisoner is actually a storm god, and they collude to hatch an escape plan. Before they escape, the acolyte overhears the goblins gossiping about the attack on Onjoji. Eventually, the god floods the cave and the *chigo* is able to escape with his servant in tow. He decides to visit his father on his way back, but discovers that his

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 141

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 142

home has been destroyed. At a loss for where to go from there, he decides to drown himself, sending his servant to notify Keikai of his self-imposed fate. The servant and Keikai return to where the servant had left the boy, and discover his body and "threw themselves down at his side and sobbed, heartbroken"<sup>85</sup>. Unable to accept the reality of the boy's death, they try to revive him by attempting to warm his body by "pressing their breasts to his skin to warm him"<sup>86</sup>. The servant and Keikai then decide to remain in the mountains to mourn the young boy.

At the same time, the Onjoji monks depart from their destroyed complex, only to encounter their patron god Shinra Daimyojin dining with Hie Sanno, the patron god of Enryakuji. The monks are baffled, and wonder why the two supposedly rival gods are keeping company with one another. Shinra Daimyojin explains that his reasoning cannot be understood by the limited capacity of the monks. Furthermore, he explains that both the destruction of the temple, as well as the young boy's death, were the means for unlocking the monks and Keikai's salvation respectively. It is Shinra Daimyojin who reveals that the boy was actually a reborn Kannon, who had knowingly set these events into motion in order to save the monks. As evidence of the young boy's salvific efficacy, we see that Keikai has now become known as the arhat Sensai. The Onjoji monks visit him, realizing their errors. Keikai, it is revealed, had intended to retire from the world, and live in unbroken solitude. However, the thatched hut in which he lived becomes a site of pilgrimage, and reinvigorates Keikai, who decides to build a temple near the capital in order to spread all he had learned from the young boy's sacrifice to others. The

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 148

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 148

tale concludes that workings of fate are mysterious, but worthy of awe.

### *Keikai as the Chigo's Symbolic Father*

I will first establish how we might read Keikai and the *chigo's* relationship as a father-son one within the story. A word of caution is necessary here; this symbolic relationship should be restricted to the logic of the narrative as well as the Buddhist motifs that animate it, and should not be applied to the historical relationship between *chigo* and monks. If we do relate these images to the historical *chigo* and monks, we threaten to conceal the sexual relationships between them, much as Faure and Atkins would say monks did by deploying these tales. I only hope to show that the text itself provides a figurative significance to the *chigo* that raises him above Keikai, and to this extent the tales might be read as in fact challenging the degree to which *chigo* were historically subjugated, inverting the power balance, if only in a fictionalized universe. If as I have argued throughout that literary value stands on its own, or at least is not merely secondary to historical meaning, then this possibility is of no small importance.

In the story itself, the *chigo's* biological father is mentioned once by the boy's servant, and twice by the narrator, but never appears in the text as a fully fleshed out character. Reference to him is brief, and all included mention can be fully included here. The first reference to the father is made when Keikai asks a young man who the *chigo* is. The boy reveals that he is the *chigo's* servant, and says: "His name is Lord Umekawa, and his father is the Hanazono Minister of the left"<sup>87</sup>. The second mention comes after the acolyte is kidnapped by goblins, leading the Onjoji monks to conclude that Hanazono had colluded with Keikai, allowing the boy to go to him: "As it was unthinkable that the

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 136

youth's father, the Minister of the Left, was not involved in the affair and also because it was difficult to advance against Mt. Hiei, more than five hundred priests of the temple stormed the Minister's Hanazono residence to vent their enmity"<sup>88</sup>. The third mention describes the aftermath of the Onjoji monks attack on his father's home, repeating that they had believed he had colluded with Keikai, then mentioning that "Since there was no way to find out what had become of the Minister, and neither was there any proper lodging for them, they decided to go to Miidera..."<sup>89</sup>.

Though each mention is sparse, I believe that they serve distinct purposes in the narrative. The first mention of the acolyte's father is simultaneously the first formal introduction to the *chigo* outside of Keikai's dream sequence and his witnessing of the *chigo* from afar. The servant, unprompted by Keikai, mentions who the *chigo's* father is. The servant however makes no mention of any other family members, nor are any siblings or the *chigo's* mother ever mentioned in the text. This raises the question; why is does the text take the time to mention the *chigo's* father, and no other familial relations? Furthermore, if the tale finds it necessary to introduce the father why does it only do so in passing? On my reading, the importance is that the very first identification that we have of the *chigo* as an actual human being, and not a mere phantasm within Keikai's dream or an idealized image that Keikai watches from afar, makes a point of emphasizing that the *chigo* is a son. It does so not by showing his relation to his uterine family or his siblings, but places emphasis on the fact that his sonhood is especially identified with his father. To put it simply, the tale wants the reader to know that the *chigo* is his father's son. The

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 142

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 146

father does not need to appear in the narrative as a character because his main function is to establish the *chigo* as a son.

The second mention serves to conflate Keikai with the *chigo's* biological father. With nothing to go on, the monks of Onjoji simply assume that the boy's father and Keikai have a shared interest in delivering him back to Keiaki. Their conflation of Keikai and Hanazono is so complete, that they include in their retaliation a campaign against the Hanazono compound. Of course, it is also possible that this is simply a redirection of their anger at Keikai, as the text mentions the difficulty of attacking Mt. Hiei. It is nevertheless the case that they do eventually storm Enryakuji, so an easy reduction of their attack on Hanazono to a kind of scapegoat is tenuous. Instead I read the conflation of the father with Keikai to serve the purpose of filling in the narrative void that surrounds the father. If I am correct that the father's central importance is to establish the *chigo's* sonhood, the gap presented in the narrative due to his non-existence in the tale as an actual character, becomes filled in by Keikai himself.

A further passage supports my reading. Upon meeting the storm god, who seeing the *chigo* and his servant grieving asks what they are lamenting, the two respond in unison: "Everytime we think of our parents' grief and our master's sorrow, our eyes flood with tears. Of course our sleeves are wet"<sup>90</sup>. In this passage, the young men pair their parent's grief with Keikai's. But since we do not see their parents sadness, and only Keikai's grief instead, Keikai takes on the active role of grieving for the *chigo*, providing the only narrative depiction of either a parent or a master. In this way Keikai fills the void left in the narrative of the expected scenes of parents grieving their lost children.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 145



In the third mention, upon finding the Hanazono compound demolished, the *chigo* becomes overcome with grief. However, the father's fate is left unknown. We do not know whether or not he survived the attack. The only detail given in the narrative of the attack itself is that "More than fifty of the Minister's retainers fought bravely in defense" but were overwhelmed by the superior Onjoji forces<sup>91</sup>. The father now occupies a further void in the narrative, he is neither alive nor dead, simply gone. After discovering that Onjoji had also been destroyed, and unsure of what to do next, the boy ultimately decides to kill himself, but not before sending one last message for his servant to send to Keikai in order to inform of his final fate. Again, we are not shown the missing father's grief over the acolyte's loss, and neither do we see any specific mention of the *chigo* mourning his parents. This act of killing himself is ultimately for the purpose, Shinra Daimyōjin reveals, of extending salvation to Keikai. Thus in the place where one might expect the *chigo* to mourn his father's passing, the *chigo* saves Keikai instead. This final passage might be further shown to illustrate how Buddhist rituals of mourning, due to their efficacy in saving parents from Hell, became understood as a superior mode of filial piety, with Confucian rituals unable to do so. In the place of his father whom he could not save, and in the place of Confucian imperatives to mourn parents for upwards of three years, the *chigo* instead saves his putative father, Keikai.

### ***Sakyamuni as the "Father of All the World" in the Lotus Sutra***

The above reading of *Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari* attempts to show that at key moments, the narrative fissure that presents itself in the absence of the *chigo's* father becomes filled in by Keikai, and to this degree becomes a symbolic stand in for his

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 142

father. I hope now to show how this resonates with Buddhist motifs that make a similar gesture by linking masters to fathers, and disciples to sons. As I have attempted to show throughout, Buddhist discourses other than sexual rhetoric can be detected in the tales. The following analysis will be made to show how Buddhist doctrine and practice support my reading that *chigo qua* disciples can be understood as son's to their masters.

Perhaps the most well known Buddhist description of disciples as sons is the parable of the burning house and of the prodigal son in Chapters three and four of the *Lotus Sutra*<sup>92</sup>. For the most part, these passages have been read as depicting the principle of expedient means (Skt. *upāya*), or in Japanese, *hōben* (方便). In the stories themselves, fathers use deceptive, but effective strategies to bring their children to enlightenment. On another level, the deployment of the stories as allegorical and metaphorical explanations for the concept of expedient means, is in itself, an expedient means. For example, the well known parable of the burning house is depicted as being told by the Buddha to his disciple, Sariputra. To emphasize some of Sariputra's less than complete understandings, the Buddha says to him, "I will now make use of similes and parables to further clarify this doctrine [of *upaya*]"<sup>93</sup>. To this end, the content of the tales themselves, as well as the utilization of story-telling as a form of Buddhist pedagogy exemplify the principle of expedient means. This reading is important in understanding the *Lotus Sutra's* importance to Mahayana Buddhism in particular. For our purposes, I wish to focus on how the father-son relationship is depicted in the stories, and how they establish the disciple as a son to the ultimate Buddhist teacher, Sakyamuni Buddha.

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<sup>92</sup> Burton Watson and Kumārajīva, *The Lotus Sutra*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 313

The *Lotus Sutra* is of further importance insofar as the *chigo monogatari*, as I describe in chapter one, have a strong Tendai inflection. While we do not know for certain what the sectarian allegiances of the author's may have been, the apotheosis of *chigo*, which is related to the doctrine of *Honji Suijaku* (本地垂迹), and the use of the Jido legend by Tendai priests, which is at least in small part derivative of *chigo* imagery, point toward a heavy Tendai association. Thus, if the author's were indeed Tendai Buddhists, the *Lotus Sutra* which was of central importance to the sect, was no doubt read by them and could be reasonably argued to have impacted the tales' composition.

The Buddha's parable of the burning house begins by describing an incredibly rich man. The man's house is so large that it has upwards of five hundred inhabitants. The size is such that the building is becoming decrepit. Despite this enormity, the house only has one way in and out. One day the house is suddenly set ablaze. The man's immediate reaction is to express concern for his sons, of which he has up to thirty: "...he thought to himself, I can escape to safety through the flaming gate, but my sons are inside the burning house enjoying themselves and playing games... The fire is closing in on them... but they do not think of trying to escape!"<sup>94</sup>.

Knowing that the sons, absorbed in their play will pay him no heed, the man must quickly devise a strategy to ensure their safety. Knowing each son well, he promises each one his favorite type of toy. Telling them that their preferred playthings are very rare, he encourages them to take every opportunity to acquire them. He then lies to them, and says that these objects are right outside of the house. They are elated, and quickly exit the house. When they ask for the promised toys, the man give them each identical

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 57

carriages of extraordinary value. The Buddha explains that realizing his immense wealth, and his impartial love for all of his sons, he wished to provide them with equal reward.

Finishing his tale, the Buddha asks Sariputra whether or not the father was guilty of falsehood, insofar as he did not deliver each child's favorite toys as promised.

Sariputra reasons that even if the man had given them nothing, he would not be guilty of falsehood because the larger point was to save their lives. The man's display of generosity in giving each the extravagant carriages, well beyond their expectations, merely punctuates just how effective his chosen strategy was.

The Buddha explains further that he is like the man, a "father to all the world," and that the man's gift to his children is equivalent to Prajñāpāramitā or the perfection of wisdom. The sentient beings who occupy the world of *samsara* are like the children, mindlessly enjoying themselves within a burning house, unaware of any danger, and the Buddha's teaching is like the father's gift, it allows his children to remove themselves not only from the burning house, but also the ignorance that they are in a burning house at all: "In this burning house which is the threefold world, they race east and west, and though they encounter great pain, they are not distressed by it." He continues "Sariputra, when the Buddha sees this, then he thinks to himself, I am the father of living beings and I should rescue them from their sufferings and give them measureless and boundless Buddha wisdom so that they may find their enjoyment in that"<sup>95</sup>.

The Buddha's positioning of himself as a father like figure is clear and direct. However, he first and foremost identifies himself as the father to "all the world" and to "living beings." This wide sweeping claim that the Buddha is the father of all, of course

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 59

registers at a personal level for a reader as well, insofar as one's self is naturally included within the Buddha's proclamation of fatherhood. It is to this extent that Alan Cole has argued that the Buddha's claim in this parable works to describe Buddhist identity in terms of sonhood. As Cole writes: "[this narrative] demonstrates that at the beginning of the Common Era an image of perfect Buddhist identity was proffered to readers in such a way that they were aged to identify themselves as the sons of the Buddha..."<sup>96</sup>.

Nevertheless, this first half of the *Lotus Sutra's* symbolism of father-son relationships works towards establishing the Buddha's fatherhood, but the sense of how a disciple is like a son, or that being a Buddhist in general is identified with sonhood remains vague.

The parable of the prodigal son brings us closer to an understanding of how the Buddha's symbolic fatherhood links to a sense that his disciples are his sons<sup>97</sup>. Unlike the burning house parable, which is narrated by the Buddha, the story of prodigal son is an allegorical query posed by four of his disciples. The perspective now shifts from the vantage point of the Buddha-father, to the view of the disciple-son. To this degree a more direct sense of how the Buddha's own disciples thought of themselves as sons is offered.

In this tale the disciples describe a son, who runs away from his wealthy father. After running away, the son does not see his father for many years. As time passes, the son becomes increasingly impoverished and becomes a wanderer in search of work. In the mean time, the father has been searching for the duration of their separation for his

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<sup>96</sup> Browning, Don S, and Marcia J. Bunge. *Children and Childhood in World Religions: Primary Sources and Texts*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2009. Chapter 5, "Buddhism" by Alan Cole, p.313.

<sup>97</sup> An interesting future project might be to compare this prodigal son narrative with the biblical prodigal son, especially framed within a discussion of Christian/Jewish and Buddhist sonhoods.

son. The father eventually gives up, and settles into a "certain city". He builds a home there, which is described in great detail: "Gold, silver, lapis lazuli, coral, amber crystal beads all filled and overflowed his storehouses"<sup>98</sup>. His success in business is described, as well as his numerous work staff and cattle he owns. It is also revealed that the father, who misses his son dearly, has never revealed his inner turmoil to anyone, and instead has pondered his son's well-being internally. He is greatly concerned that without a son, his wealth will not be passed on to an heir.

The son eventually happens into this "certain city." The son goes from house to house seeking some form of work, until he eventually comes, unknowingly, to his father's home. He stares in awe at the father's opulent and majestic home. He suddenly becomes wary that the house must belong to someone of great importance, perhaps a king. Concerned that he will be forced into labor, rather than working for a wage, he decides to move on as quickly as possible. The father immediately recognizes his son, and calls on a random bystander to retrieve his son. The son is appalled, thinking again that the inhabitant of the house has intentions of forcing his labor, or even that he is being accused of a crime for which he will be executed. Witnessing his son's concerns, the father tells the bystander to sprinkle water on his face and send him along his way.

All the while, the father has told no one, even the bystander whom he has asked to retrieve his son that he is in fact the man's father. The disciple's explain that this is the father's expedient means. The father deploys a further strategy to bring his son back to him, sending two impoverished men to offer the son a job in his household, believing the men's impoverished appearance will not arouse intimidation in his son.

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<sup>98</sup> Watson, Lotus Sutra, 1993, p. 81

The ploy is successful and the son comes to the home to work, along with the two men his father sent, as clearers of excrement. The son does this work for some time. One day, seeing the son caked in filth, the father goes to him, and covers himself with dirt and picks up the shovel for clearing excrement in his hand. He does so to as a means of going closer to his son without revealing himself as his father.

He then tells his son, who is still unaware that he is father, that because of the young man's hard work and lack of resentment at his task, that he will become like a son to him and will take care of him henceforth. Nevertheless, the young man believes himself to be unworthy, and chooses to continue on with his current job. After twenty or so years, the father begins to fall ill, and both realizing that his time has come, and that the son has become more "self-assured and magnanimous" reveals his true identity<sup>99</sup>.

After telling the story, the disciples make two direct comparisons to the characters in the tales with themselves and the Buddha. The father is the Buddha, and they, the disciples, are his sons. Like the son who is so humbled by his station that he does not initially accept the father's offer to take care of him "like a son," the disciples are attached to lesser teachings, thinking themselves unworthy, and therefore like the prodigal son, "did not know that we were in truth the sons of the Buddha"<sup>100</sup>. This narrative complements the first, in which the Buddha makes clear his own feelings of obligation to his "sons," offering the perspective from the disciples feelings of obligation to their symbolic "father". The effect of this tale is great enough, that according to Faure, "the

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 85

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 59

biological father is displaced by the spiritual master"<sup>101</sup>. In this sense, the equivalence of the disciples to the prodigal son replaces the role of the father, placing the master-disciple relationship as the highest pinnacle of all male to male relations. On the other hand, I read the equivalence to not so much displace the role of the father, as to conflate its importance with the figure of the master. Much in the same way that the *chigo's* disappearing father leaves a narrative gap for Keikai to occupy, the master, the historical Buddha himself, fills the role of the disciples fathers, and in turn they become his sons.

Ultimately then, the *Lotus Sutra's* deployment of father-son imagery provides a doctrinal explanation for how a *chigo*, who is also a disciple, might be read as a son like figure for his father like disciple. However, this highly symbolic equivalence still remains tethered to the Buddha as the ultimate father figure and spiritual master. I will now turn to the Chan context to illustrate how this more abstracted conflation of the master *qua* Buddha to father, and disciple to son is utilized to describe the relationship on a less mythologized scale.

### ***Masters and Fathers/Disciples and Sons (The Chan Context)***

Before explicating how this symbolic equivalence becomes ritualized and codified in the Chan/Zen monastery, I must make an important clarification. It is crucial to remind ourselves that the *chigo monogatari* is heavily inflected with Tendai motifs. Therefore, a comparison to Chan monastic practice might at first appear dubious. However, it is equally important to note that regardless of the presumed Tendai affiliations of the tales' authors, they are *not* sectarian doctrine. I therefore have chosen to consciously read them as transectarian vernacular Buddhist literature, which are at

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<sup>101</sup> Faure, *Power of Denial*, 2003, p. 145



once readable as reflections of particular Tendai motifs, but also reflective of broader Buddhist concerns not restricted to Tendai doctrine.

I briefly discuss Chan motifs of master-disciple/father-son relations in this light. The first important motif is the concept of lineage, a core doctrine in Chan formulations of master to disciple transmission, which patterns itself after patrilineal genealogy. The second is the incorporation of Confucian models of filial piety to funerary customs, in which the disciple mourns his master as his father<sup>102</sup>.

As John Mcrae describes the genealogical nature of lineage patterns, "By saying that Chan practice is fundamentally *genealogical*, I mean that is derived from a genealogically understood encounter experience that is *relational* (involving interaction between individuals rather than being based solely on individual effort), *generational* (in that it is organized according to parent-child, or rather, teacher-student generations), and *reiterative* (i.e, intended for emulation and repetition in the lives of present and future teachers and students"<sup>103</sup>. Most importantly for us is the *generational* nature of lineage, which models itself after parent-child relations across time.

The importance of lineage is such that it began to inform specific forms of Zen practice, including kōan practice. Kōan are cryptic parables of enlightenment, told for practitioners to decipher, and thereby allow them to gain the same enlightenment as that experienced by the master who corresponds to the kōan. The Soto Zen kōan manual, the *Denkōroku*, authored by Keizan sometime in the decade between 1230 and 1240 includes

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<sup>102</sup> For a broader discussion of the influence of filial piety on Buddhism in China see Cole, Alan. *Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1998.

<sup>103</sup> John R. McRae, *Seeing Through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003, p. 8.

parables that include Sakyamuni himself<sup>104</sup>. This practice formalizes the manner in which lineage is realized in practice - the relational aspect of lineage's genealogical formulation is thus symbolic as much as actual. In Kōan practice, one is able to gain access to a continual chain of enlightenment that links one to the Buddha, and provides the kind of relational "encounter experience" that Mcrae describes with masters who have long passed on. This type of direct transmission, exemplified in kōan is described in the very early Chan text, *Records of the Teachers and Students of the Lanka School* (dated approximately to 739), in the following way: "If not for encounters with good and wise teachers, there would be no transmission from "father" to "son"<sup>105</sup>.

The Chan/Zen concept of lineage can be usefully incorporated into our discussion of the *Lotus Sutra*, and provides insight into how this particular brand of Buddhist norms links to formulations of sonhood. Lineage charts sometimes extend so far back in time that they are readable, according to Peter Haskel as "theoretically traced... to the Buddha himself"<sup>106</sup>. Mcrae has also argued, however, that lineage does not give an objective historical account, but changed form over time to articulate what was important for specific times and places. Whatever the reasons, the disciple's continuity with the historical Buddha, articulated through a procession of all male "descendants" or "ancestors" and constructed as a genealogical lineage chart, cannot help but recall to us that the original master-disciple relationship between the Buddha and his disciples was already described by the start of the Common Era, as father-son relationship. Where the

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<sup>104</sup> For a full translation see Keizan, and Thomas F. Cleary. *Transmission of Light: Zen in the Art of Enlightenment*. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990.

<sup>105</sup> J C Cleary, *Zen Dawn: Early Zen Texts from Tun Huang*, Boston: Shambhala, 1986, p. 26.

<sup>106</sup> Menzan, Zuihō, and Peter Haskel. *Letting Go: The Story of Zen Master Tōsui : Tōsui Oshō Densan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001, p. 2.

Tendai sect may have leaned on the *Lotus Sutra* to understand its sectarian identity as a kind of sonhood, Chan/Zen Buddhists, who view transmission to occur distinct from the reading and consumption of Buddhist texts, supplant textual learning with direct, or as Mcrae calls it "relational" that nevertheless echoes the textual patterning of master-disciple relations to paternal ones.

The equivalence of Chan disciples to sons and their masters to fathers becomes formally ritualized in certain funerary customs, in which the disciple was expected to mourn for his master, especially the temple abbot, in a similar fashion to a filial Confucian son mourning his father. According to Cole, beginning at least in 1103 following the writing of the ritual text, *Chan Yuan Qing Gui*, disciples were cast as "filial sons" (*xiao zi*), expected to dress themselves in Confucian style mourning clothes (*xiao fu*), and to "keep vigil over the coffin, while the chief mourner leads the other in worshipping the portrait"<sup>107</sup>. Ultimately, this type of funeral format acted as a means of ensuring that the deceased monk retained a degree of control over his clergy as kind of "family network" as Cole calls it, even in his death.

For Cole this custom is important insofar as it shows the degree to which Confucian norms became gradually incorporated themselves into Chinese Buddhist practices. More precisely, this custom framed Buddhist funerary practice within the preexisting Confucian funerary format as a means of legitimating the canonization of Buddhist monks upon their death: "[the abbot's] funeral needs to be understood as a sophisticated ritual technique that constructs sainthood and legitimizes it by referring to Buddhist hagiographical precedents and to a tightly organized familial system modeled

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<sup>107</sup> Alan Cole, "Upside Down/right Side Up: a Revisionist History of Chan Funerary Practice." *History of Religions*. 35.4 (1996), p. 311.

on the ideal Confucian family"<sup>108</sup>. This particular style of funeral thus shows how the putative father to son transmission that is depicted in lineage charts could be maintained even after the abbot's death, which required the incorporation of Confucian filial piety to be sustained in Chinese society. For our purposes, we see that such funeral formats show how the mythological scale of father-son/master-disciple relations, which remained, even in lineage charts, within a highly symbolic register that inscribed the relationship with respect to Buddha and disciple, became more readily available to the monastic context in which the master is an ordinary Buddhist monk. Still, the less grandiose scale this equivalence of course only implies a scaling back of the symbolic significance, which remains figuratively construed.

### *The Chigo's Capacity to Save*

The preceding analysis showed how in Buddhist doctrine and practices can be usefully marshaled to show how discipleship and sonship, fatherhood and masterhood, become inscribed as ideal forms of Buddhist identity. In the case of the *Lotus Sutra* we see how the Buddha is described as an ideal father through his self-proclamation that like the father who saves his sons from the burning house, he seeks to liberate all of existence from the world of appearances. In the parable of the prodigal son, the disciple's duty to his father *qua* Buddha is constructed as a willingness to receive the teachings of father, and to overcome his attachment to inferior forms of knowledge. The Chan context modifies some of these insights, but also largely reiterates others. In the context of lineage, the value of the father-son relationship is now cast in terms of direct transmission, and to this end does not depart significantly from the *Lotus Sutra's*

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 314

description of the prodigal son - the disciple should become receptive to his ancestral predecessors, up to and including the Buddha who is linked to them through lineage, and transmits his enlightenment like father to son. The move to codify the father-son/master-disciple in the Chan funerary context, however, begins to show a slight shift. The putative relationship of the disciple to his master-father is no longer exclusively formulated as a link to the historical Buddha. In this figurative alignment of disciples and masters to sons and fathers, the disciple's mourning legitimates his master's canonization. Though he is not obligated to extend enlightenment to his father-master, who in death proves that he has become enlightened, the disciple's participation nevertheless ensures that his master will be remembered and made into a saint. In this ritual the master maintains his control over his putative sons, but it is the disciple's mourning of him that enables the master's power to extend beyond death.

The role of the son does indeed take on a different light when further investigated within the Confucianizing context of China, and appears to give the son the more active salvific role in the son-parent relationship more generally. In China, and later in Japan, a series of images and tales featuring Buddhist monks saving their mothers begins to emerge. In particular the legendary exploits of Mulian, who is both a filial son in accordance Confucian norms of filial piety, *and* an exemplary Buddhist practitioner, begin to circulate and multiply at an impressive pace. This newly developing image of the son who actively pursues the salvation of his mother becomes important in Japanese Buddhist ritual and literature as well. A further thread of daughter's becoming bodhisattvas to save their mothers also emerges.

To be clear, this impressive salvific prowess, exemplified in Mulian saving his

mother, is never seen being extended towards fathers, neither by Mulian, nor as far as I can tell, any other comparable figure. Nor do we see sons becoming Jizo (Chn. Dizang, Skt. Ksitigarbha) as in the well-known tale of the filial daughter Bright Eyes. Nevertheless these images imbue the status of childhood with special spiritual capacities unique to a child's relationship to his parents. Furthermore, if my preceding analysis of the father-son/master-disciple relationship across Tendai and Zen contexts has successfully shown how *chigo* might have been inscribed with similar expectations of sonhood, in the *Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari* we in fact *do* see a son become a bodhisattva, and we are also indeed witness to a son extending his saving grace to his master *qua* father. Therefore to make sense of how we can read this inversion of doctrine within the tales, which allows for fathers to be equally in need of their son's help, I will briefly examine the Mulian and Bright Eye narratives. In so doing, I hope to make clearer how the *chigo's* apotheosis in the tale is not simply an instance of an anonymous historical monk fabricating a tale to dehumanize the acolyte, and thereby validate the practice of *chigo-monk sex*<sup>109</sup>. Instead the revelation that the boy is Kannon can be read as the figurative elevation of the *chigo* that pushes back against how this hypothetical monk deployed his image, and even in spite of this monk's best efforts, leaves a trace that provides the plausible reading that he, and not Keikai, nor the historical counterpart to the monkly figure, is the ideal Buddhist practitioner.

In the narrative of the story proper, the *chigo's* identification of Kannon inscribes his salvific prowess on a much wider scale than simply his extension of enlightenment to

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<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, it should be noted that the son's role with respect to his parents was not uniformly described in the savior role. The well known fifth chapter of the *Tannisho* in which Shinran is said to have written: "I Shinran have never even once uttered the nembutsu for the sake of my father and mother" (8), provides an alternative view. Shinran, and Taitetsu Unno. *Tannisho: A Shin Buddhist Classic*. Honolulu, Hawaii: Buddhist Study Center Press, 1996.

Keikai. This both suggests the degree to which the *chigo* embodies the universalistic compassion of a bodhisattva, and also resists the degree to which his apotheosis is seen as causing the *chigo* suffering, but Keikai salvation. This uneven fate, in which a *chigo* is mercilessly killed off, has, as I have described above, been read by Atkins as proof that monks sought to dehumanize the *chigo* to turn them into scapegoats for their own transgressions. But it is clear in the tale that the *chigo's* salvific activity is part of a design to extend salvation to those who have harmed him most; his fellow Onjoji monks who both caused the destruction of his institutional home and his family home, leaving him completely homeless. Indeed it is the case that his fellow Onjoji monks, not Keikai, cause him to suffer most. His inclusion of these monks thus displays his indiscriminatory, unattached salvation that is directed to even those who destroyed his homes and perhaps even killed his family.

The *chigo's* extension of his salvific powers to the Onjoji monks also contests the degree to which Atkins reads the monks in these tales are inauthentic in their feelings. In the passage that I cited in the introduction to this chapter, Atkins includes a dismissive statement that the monks who loved the acolytes, and as he adds parenthetically "(or thought they loved them)," do not actually suffer a loss upon the *chigo's* death because he is not truly human. However as Shinra Daimyojin reveals, the *chigo* was a rebirth of the Ishiyama Kannon from the outset, and his actions served to both free Keikai from his attachment to the *chigo*, and through his catalyzation of the battle between the two temples, also frees the Onjoji cohort from their attachment to their rivalry with Enryakuji and their institutionally determined identity: "With the loss of the temple and priests' quarters there is opportunity now for merit to be earned through contributions towards its

reconstruction. With the loss of the sutras and *sastras*, the commentaries and sacred teaching, a fate of future enlightenment may be secured by recopying them. One has earned Buddhahood in this world by merit of his religious practices surely will not remain caught in the cycle of *samsara*"<sup>110</sup>. It is clear in his statements that Shinra Daimyojin believes that the monks of the temple for whom he is the patron deity, have grafted their Buddhist identities onto the Onjoji complex and the institutional identity it bestows to them. The destruction of the temple allows them to refocus their work on Buddhist practice and learning. The larger point that I hope to illustrate is that while the logic of Shinra Daimyojin might suppress the degree to which the monks suffer at the loss of Onjoji, ultimately such a loss would no doubt be truly devastating for any monk. The destruction of a sacred Buddhist complex, from which, better or worse, an entire congregation of monks derives its identity, cannot be so easily dismissed. If this loss is therefore equivalent to the loss of the *chigo* for Keikai, insofar as both losses are designed to enlighten Keikai and the monks, within the narrative logic of the tale, I argue that the death of the boy is understood as at least as tragic as the displaced monks of Onjoji.

A closer reading further contests Atkins' interpretation that Keikai's feelings for the boy are inauthentic and "not truly tragic". Both Keikai and the boy make somatic and embodied displays of their grief. The monk cries uncontrollably upon finding the boy's body, and the *chigo* sheds tears after he has heard about Miidera's destruction, as well as upon discovering the burnt down remains of his family home. However, if in fact Shinra Daimyojin's revelation that the *chigo* was a knowing vessel of Kannon is true, then we must also regard the boy's affective responses, including his questioning of whether he

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<sup>110</sup> Childs, *Chigo Monogatari*, 1980, p. 150



had slighted the gods, as displays of emotion for the benefit of others. In fact, save for Keikai's dream and the first encounter between the two, we are never shown the *chigo* by himself in the entire story - he is always accompanied by his servant, in the presence of his goblin captors or the storm god, and together with Keikai. We in fact only have access to the *chigo's* public display of emotion. In contrast we see Keikai falling ill and experiencing heart ache, even when he is unseen by others. To this end, I argue that there is no way of knowing, at least textually, if the boy's tears are ever authentic, especially if in fact he knew all along that he was a rebirth of the Ishiyama Kannon. Thus, the conclusion that the boy suffers, while the suffering of others is no true loss, can only be made by overdetermining the authenticity of the boy's emotional displays, and simultaneously undermining the extent to which Keikai's emotions are real. The absurd image of Keikai and the acolyte's servant pressing their breasts to the *chigo* in hopes of reviving him further illustrate Keikai's desperation and powerlessness in the face of the boy's death.

The final, and ultimate display of the efficacy of the *chigo's* salvific prowess is in the fate of Keikai. After deciding to live in the woods nearby where he and the acolyte's servant found the *chigo's* body, Keikai decides to live in complete solitude. However, some time after the destruction of Onjoji, thirty of the displaced monks head towards his location. There they find that their formerly sworn enemy, Keikai, has become an arhat and has changed his name to Sensai. In part inspired by the monks visit, and in part recalling the *chigo*, he changes his plans, and builds a new temple near the capital, taking on many disciples. After this change, Keikai *qua* Sensai is himself compared to bodhisattvas: "Like the twenty-five bodhisattvas who welcome the reborn into paradise

with music and song, he inspired faith in the hearts of all who saw him"<sup>111</sup>. The *chigo qua* Kannon's machinations are so successful that Keikai has ascended from ordinary monk to arhat, then symbolically, from arhat to bodhisattva. Keikai himself would never have been capable of such a feat. When Keikai is first introduced, his religious learning and spiritual capacity is not emphasized; instead he is shown to be highly skilled in literature and is also an extraordinarily adept warrior: "He would wrap in the sleeves of his priestly robes of resignation the compassionate salvation of the masses and he would show fierce courage with his conquering sword... He was a true master of both the literary and military arts"<sup>112</sup>. On the one hand he is attributed as carrying the salvation of the masses with his sleeves, but on the other, this is a merely external display, quire literally only wearing these hopes upon his sleeve. Several lines latter, he laments that "... I am preoccupied only with fame and profit. In my heart I feel shame at neglecting the practices that would free me from this world of life and death"<sup>113</sup>. The initial introduction of his outwardly display of compassion is immediately contrasted with the workings of his interior, that is, within his heart he laments his inability to abide by the teachings. In short, he is a failure as a Buddhist.

The *chigo* on the other hand, first in being Kannon, but also in his effective extension of salvation to others over and against himself, embodies the virtues of a bodhisattva from the beginning. For it is Keikai's intent to go to Ishiyama to pray to Kannon to correct his ways, and upon the seventeenth night of prostrations, he has the

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 151

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 133

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p.133

vision of the boy, clearly representing the *chigo qua* Kannon heeding his call. To this end, even before his physical introduction he has begun his work of saving Keikai from his delusions. Taken together with the ways in which Keikai fills in the void left in the absence of the acolytes father, both upon the father's disappearance after the attack on his home, and in the fact that he does not appear in the flesh, this salvation is directed at a master who takes on a fatherly significance. This power of the *chigo* to save his symbolic father is his primary characteristic, and to this degree it is hard to reduce his significance to a sexual plaything for Keikai. As I argued in my introduction to this project, the tale's hesitancy to depict sexual acts between the *chigo* and Keikai, even in the face of precedent established by *Chigo no Soshi* nearly sixty years before the composition of the *Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari*, calls into question the degree to which this tale can be described as all about sex. It is true that stock motifs from Heian court literature or deployed - their meeting is facilitated by an exchange of letters through a servant; the object of affection, the *chigo*, is at first hesitant, but finally acquiesces to an intimate encounter; upon parting the fragrance of the boy lingers on Keikai's sleeves, and he laments their separation in verse; and finally he falls physically ill at the distance between them. Whether or not the presumed monk-author incorporated these motifs as a justification of, at the very least, *chigo*-monk romances, the absence of depictions of sexual activity suggests to me that the story does not explicitly place sex at the tales center, at least at the narrative level. The maneuver to read the tale as justifying sex with *chigo* the is only possible by ignoring the narrative and stylistic choices of the author, and to this degree, restrict the production of meaning to a historical counterpart external to the text that is seen to more effectively encapsulate the stories ability to signify the *chigo*.

The story that the tale itself wants to tell is fairly straightforward and clear - the *chigo qua* Kannon holds the balance of power, embodied in his extension of enlightenment to others, and he is willing to sacrifice himself to do so. Quite simply, in contrast to the failed Buddhist Keikai, the *chigo* is the perfect Buddhist.

***Mulian and Dizang/Jizo: the Children Who Save Their Parents***

The above reading of the tale was intended to highlight two facets of the *chigo's* capacities as a Buddhist practitioner. First, as a disciple *qua* son he is able to save his symbolic father, much in the way that the Buddhist rhetoric I describe below suggests that children can save their parents. Secondly, the *chigo's* apotheosis can be read, at least to an extent, at face value. What his transformation accomplishes is widely spread enlightenment of nearly all parties within the tale. The acolyte is not a bodhisattva *qua* subhuman being, but a bodhisattva *qua* bodhisattva. To this degree the story depicts a *chigo* taking on the central practice of Mahayana Buddhist salvation. It is only after the *chigo's* plan successfully enlightens Keikai that the latter is shown possessing a similar capacity. Therefore, the *chigo* stands within the tale as the superior Buddhist practitioner, bringing Keikai to the borders of bodhisattvahood.

I make my following analysis of Buddhist texts to highlight the duty of the son to save his mother as a means of showing how preexisting Buddhist conceptions may be usefully compared to the *chigo's* ability in the tale to save his symbolic parent. In the Mulian and Bright Eyes accounts, the child must save his or her mother, which is the normative expectation in Buddhist doctrine -sons do not save their fathers in the same way. The *chigo monogatari*, if read with respect to these motifs, provides an alternative formulation to the Mulian account in particular, in which a father, or at least a symbolic

father, requires the help of son-disciple to lead him to enlightenment. I hope to show that beginning with Mulian, this understanding of sonhood made its way to Japan in a similar cluster of images centered around the *Ketsubonkyo*. Secondly, the ideal child's proximity to bodhisattvahood, illustrated in Bright Eyes apotheosis into the form the Dizang, as well as a medieval Japanese folk song that heavily ties the image of Jizo to infants in the afterlife, establishes a doctrinal precedent for children to become bodhisattvas to save their mother's, and can therefore provide an alternative explanation for the *chigo's* own apotheosis in a similar manner, now they have ability to save their symbolic fathers.

It appears that the historical emergence of the Mulian narrative can be read as a means of incorporating Buddhist teachings into pre-existing Confucian ritual hierarchies and filial piety. The upshot of this incorporation was to make an image of ideal Buddhist sonhood a means of ensuring patronage for small temples capitalizing on this nascent Buddhist notion of filial piety. In particular, mother-son relationships were seized upon as a means of encouraging such patronage. According to Cole, the Ghost Festival, and the associated *Ghost Festival Sutra*, a ritual and ritual manual popular in 6th century China, contains some of the first mention of Mulian. His image as the ultimate filial son of the Buddhist tradition was one important way in which the mother-son relationship was utilized for fundraising purposes and for securing institutional legitimacy. Specifically, the image of Mulian's filial piety was marshaled to quell Confucian charges that Buddhism was unfilial by emphasizing Mulian's dual role as both a filial son and a Buddhist monk, thereby allowing "Buddhist models of monkly discipline [to be] conjoined with filial expectations in which care for parents, and ancestors, is

paramount"<sup>114</sup>.

In the *Ghost Festival Sutra*, this Buddhist instantiation of filial piety is in fact construed as superior to Confucian models of the same expectations of child-parent relationships. Mulian is motivated out of his strong desire to repay his mother's "kindness of breast-feeding," hoping to feed his dead mother's spirit directly, a common practice in Confucian mourning ritual. Instead, Mulian discovers that such offerings "changed into flaming coals" as soon as his mother brought them to her mouth. Aghast, Mulian goes to Sakyamuni for advice. The Buddha tells him that "masters of the heterodox paths - the Daoist priests - and the four spirit kings of heaven, cannot do anything about it"<sup>115</sup>. The four spirit kings whom the Buddha names within the text likely refer to the three sage kings, which depending on the source include Fu Xi, Shennong, Huangdi, and occasionally Suiren. To this degree we see a direct intertextual contestation of Confucian filial values, though the need for virtuous filial consciousness is retained, albeit now in Buddhist terms.

In the text the Buddha encourages Mulian instead to make an offering of gifts including fruits, oils, and bedding to an assembly of monks who, having been energized by the gifts, will become "released", at the same time offering salvation to the spirits of seven generations of ancestors that include his parents. The Buddha emphasizes that having taken the Buddhist precepts, the monks "virtue is vast indeed"<sup>116</sup>. Thus, the text simultaneously fortifies the superior learning and enlightenment of the monks who, like

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<sup>114</sup> Cole, *Children and Childhood*, 2009, p. 322

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 323

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322-324

bodhisattvas, will release themselves in simultaneity with Mulian's parents, and by extension, all sentient beings. This serves the purpose of showing that Buddhist ritual practice is superior, at least in terms of easing the suffering of the dead generally speaking, and the spirits of loved ones in particular, when compared to Confucian ceremonies. On the same token, it shows that such filial virtue is best exemplified by making offerings to the assembly, and it is easy to see how existing temples might have utilized this sutra, along with the corresponding Ghost festival, for fundraising purposes. In the Japanese context, Duncan Williams has shown, similar services that gave posthumous ordination and guided dead family members through the levels of Hell continued to be popular into the Tokugawa period, and may in fact may be characterized as a major source for the continued success of Soto Zen during the decades spanning the Ieyasu Bakufu's hegemonic control over religious institutions, in spite of its strident regulations<sup>117</sup>.

This tendency to view the mother as an object to be rescued, and, the son's love as precisely characterized by an obligation to rescue her, became even more pronounced in Japan. Nakano Yuko has shown how the story of Moggattana in the earlier mentioned *ketsubonkyo*, is the source of the hugely popular and well attended Bon Festival (festival of the dead), and is also described in the *Urabon'e* sutra. In all versions of the story, Moggattana saves his mother from the gender-specific Blood Pond Hell. Nakano describes Moggattana's mother's descent into hell as being cause by the fact that: "her love for her son was so great that she treated other people coldly"<sup>118</sup>. This resonates with

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<sup>117</sup> Williams, Duncan R. *The Other Side of Zen: A Social History of Sōtō Zen: Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005.

some of Ohnuma Reiko's findings about mother-son relationships in which the mother's love is understood as vast, but also exclusionary, particularistic, and directed only towards her own child<sup>119</sup>. This motherly love is seen as a source of attachment for both the mother herself, as well as her son, and therefore suggest that she must be overcome. In the Japanese context, as well as in the Chinese legend of Mulian, the mother is not to be overcome, as this displays a broadly Theravadin view of Buddhist enlightenment as self-overcoming, and is rather reflective of the Mahayana imperative to save others over and against the self. The mother is no longer the symbol of all attachment that a Buddhist must overcome, but the stand in for all suffering beings whom the Buddhist must bring to salvation. This also shows how Mulian-like salvific obligation to mothers became inscribed in Japan.

Lori Meeks has also shown how Saidaiji monks and their female counterparts, the nuns of the Hokkeji convent created competing formulations of motherhood. Eison, Soji, Ninsho and others produced at least four core images of mother in Ritsu sect Buddhism: "(1) all mothers are destined to hell and in need of salvation, (2) children owe a great filial debt to their mothers, (3) all women are manifestation of a single mother figure, and (4) by working toward the salvation of all women, Buddhist priest can save their own mothers"<sup>120</sup>. These formulations, especially the first two are resonant with Mulian and *ketsubonkyo* narratives. The last two simply consolidate the salvation women by showing that all women are mothers, or at least could be or have been, and are also

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<sup>118</sup> Okuda, Akiko, and Haruko Okano. *Women and Religion in Japan*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998. "Women and Buddhism – Blood Impurity and Motherhood" Nakano, Yuko p. 78.

<sup>119</sup> See especially chapter 1, "A Mother's Heart Is Tender": Buddhist depictions of mother love" (11-35).

<sup>120</sup> Meeks, *Hokkeji*, 2010, p. 266.



symbolically tied to an abstract and all encompassing mother figure. Enkyo and Shinnyo of the Hokkeji convent however establish their conceptions of motherhood around such legendary figures as Empress Komyo and Queen-consort Hashihito, and appear to largely ignore their Saidaiji counterparts rhetoric.

In all of these inscriptions of sons and mothers, the salvific role of the son is cast alongside an implicit Buddhist claim to be the most efficient managers of death and the afterlife, particularly for the death of loved ones, and that much more so for the death of mother. This is also the case with the story of Bright Eyes. In the *Sutra on the Original Vow of the Bodhisattva Dizang*, a story is recounted of how an especially potent and meritorious arhat encountered a woman named Bright Eyes<sup>121</sup>. She gives the arhat an offering of food, and he asks what she desires in return. Explaining that she has attempted to ritually mourn her dead mother, she also laments that the results of her piety have not yet appeared. The arhat enters meditation to ponder her query, and recommends the Buddhist path. She quickly agrees and becomes a renunciate. Ultimately the Buddha himself tells her that her mother will be saved and that she will become the bodhisattva Dizang. For Cole the tale works to inscribe Buddhist identity with filial consciousness, making Bright Eyes piety akin to Mulian's. It also further concretizes the notion that these mother-son relationships were a way for Buddhists to ensure their monopoly on the business of death, showing that the daughter will become the guardian of the dead, concretizes the Buddhist autonomy carved out by showing that Buddhist rituals more effectively ensure the safety of parents in the afterlife than Confucian equivalents. I wish to also emphasize that the obligation of Bright Eyes to her mother creates the conditions

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<sup>121</sup> For an in depth study of various inscriptions of Dizang in Chinese Buddhist culture, including her associations with Bright Eyes, see Zhiru Ng, *The Making of a Savior Bodhisattva: Dizang in Medieval China*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007.

for her apotheosis, and how this fleshes out the significance of the *chigo's* transformations into Kannon. Both can be imagined to be apotheosized as bodhisattvas due to their filial piety, and their ability to save their parents through Buddhist practice.

Dizang's association with children and parents became important in Japan as well. This image of Jizo became popularized in Japan through the fourteenth century folk song, *A Song About the River Sai*<sup>122</sup>. In this song, as Cole argues "Jizo is clearly imagined to be especially involved with the postmortem fate of children... Thus instead of the tortured mother in Hell, as in the Mulian stories, it is the tortured children that are brought on stage to coerce still-alive parents into fulfilling their ritual obligations"<sup>123</sup>. I find this further modification of the Jizo tale to be especially useful for two reasons. It is difficult to apply the above formulations to the *chigo monogatari* because of their emphasis on death management - insofar as it is only the *chigo* who dies, it is impossible to argue that he saves his symbolic father in the afterlife. But if seen as part and parcel of a gradually developing thread that takes shape in this popular Japanese folk song, we see that these formulations take root, in the same century that most of tales were written, and in a form that places children's deaths within the province of a bodhisattva's domain. Further the song illustrates how the child's ability to remonstrate and correct their parents ritual behavior includes not only mothers, but fathers as well. For example, one line of the song states: "[the infants] sorrow bites, penetrates/And the activity of these infants/Consists of gathering river stones/And of making merit stupas out of them; The

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<sup>122</sup> Browning, Don S, and Marcia J. Bunge. *Children and Childhood in World Religions: Primary Sources and Texts*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2009. Chapter 5, "Buddhism" by Alan Cole, (327-328).

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 327

first story is for their fathers/ And the second for their mothers..."<sup>124</sup>. Even as demon appears to show them that their parents are not mirroring their ritual conduct by creating memorials for them in the world of the living, their work to create these stupas to extend merit to their parents becomes foregrounds their superior practice over and against their parents.

As the song closes, Jizo then offers himself as the children's mother and father. While here Jizo is in the role of parent, there is nevertheless a certain power ascribed to the infants who are rescued by Jizo; the song ascribes the role of saving children to Jizo, but the role of saving parents who delude themselves with improper conduct is given to the infants, who are made more potent, we can only imagine, after becoming the sons of the bodhisattva. In this account, there is a clear equivalence of the infants to Jizo, but their identification, such as the one between Dizang and Bright Eyes appears to have been pulled apart, such that they embody two distinct sets of filial relations - Jizo is their spiritual parent, and the infants save their biological parents through their steadfast Buddhist practice. I hope to show how taking the Bright Eyes motif of Dizang and the image of Jizo in *A Song About the River Sai* together, we are nevertheless able to see four general categories for understanding bodhisattvahood with respect to sonhood, and children's obligations to parents more generally. First, the apotheosis of a child, even a daughter, into Dizang is the direct result of filial piety. Second, this transformation into Dizang is also a way of describing how Mahayana Buddhist practice is situated within a broader demand to save others before oneself- Bright Eyes is ensured her transformation precisely because she has put her mother before herself, evidenced in her willingness to

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 328

renounce the world to expedite her mother's safety. Third, in the Jizo song, the children's role is inverted with respect to older norms of filial expectations in which the tortured mother in Hell awakens her son's compassion, and instead, it is the infants who are described in the afterlife. However, in this afterlife the infants do not wait to be saved by their parents, like Mulian or Bright Eyes's mother do for their children, but instead they continue to cultivate their single minded Buddhist practice, diligently building stupas to extend merit to their parents, even from beyond, and even as their parents' incorrect mourning fails to save them. Fourth, Jizo takes on their burden by becoming like their fathers and mothers, but in this move, he also strengthens their Buddhist sense of compassion by providing them with his own unmatched brand of compassion. They are in this way, not so dissimilar from Jizo himself, continuing Buddhist practice even from the underworld. The first cluster of Dizang related images shows how the filial child is literally a bodhisattva, and the second set of Jizo motifs illustrates how the child can be *like* a bodhisattva. Both work to show, I argue, how childhood and bodhisattvahood are proximate categories.

The *chigo* of *Aki no Yo no Nagamongatari* embodies most of these formulations in his apotheosis, but perhaps also modifies others. First, his apotheosis is in part readable as the result of his symbolic filial piety to Keikai, though in a sense it works in reverse; he heeds the call of the Keikai who prays at Ishiyama while he is in the form of Kannon, choosing to take on the form of a *chigo*-disciple through whom he can become a son-like savior to the monk. Second, Shinra Daimyōjin's revelation of the *chigo's* true identity cements Kannon's intended design as the enlightenment not only of Keikai, but even the monks who destroy both of his homes, and possibly kill his father. He puts even

their soundness of mind over and against his own. Third, after his death, even as he has departed the world, it his image and lingering presence that prompts Keikai to eventually become an ideal Buddhist practitioner who is himself compared to the twenty five bodhisattvas. To this end the *chigo* continues to impact Keikai from beyond, and if he is at all like Jizo's infants, than he is not merely eating in the afterlife to be saved, but is continuing to cultivate his religious practice. Lastly, as a bodhisattva, the *chigo's* compassion continues to emanate from the world beyond. These images of bodhisattvas who are linked to filial children as either their physical vessels or as practitioners with bodhisattva like compassion, thus help us to see how the *chigo's* apotheosized status is just that, he is a truly efficacious bodhisattva who has a special ability to save those closet to him; his monkly family at Onjoji, and his symbolic father, Keikai. The tale however, also provides a way for us to sharpen our understanding of these Buddhist motifs. The *chigo* is able to provide a platform of salvation to Keikai who is like his father, and indeed fills all the spaces in the tale left by his biological father's textual absence. To this end, a possibility that begins to obliquely present itself in *A Song About the River Sai*, children can provide enlightenment to both parents, becomes figuratively and imaginatively animated in the figure of the acolyte, who has successfully brought Keikai *qua* his father to door step of Bodhisattvahood.

### ***Conclusion***

By identifying key motifs regarding childhood that may be read to present themselves in at least one *chigo monogatari*, I hope to have shed at least some plausible doubt on a reading that exclusively reduces their significance to how they were deployed by Buddhist monks seeking to conceal real world transgressions in other worldly

religious rhetoric. Opening a space for the trope of the *chigo* that does not subordinate his deified status to strategic concealment of sexual violence, but rather, views his sacredness as a description of the love that a child has for his parent/master, might allow us to see how the *chigo* possessed a complex power of his own. If we read this power against the grain of the normalized perception that he was a helpless child, we might offer a provisional reading that inverts the power balance, and shows that the ideal Buddhist practitioner is not an arhat, Bodhisattva, or monk, but the exemplary son and the sacred *chigo*. In the final analysis, this reading is one among many, and should be regarded as an avenue of interpretation that supplements, expands, and critically engages, rather than replaces or overrides other readings of the tales. On the other hand however, if the scholarly interpretation of the *chigo monogatari* has often been motivated, at least in part, by a desire to recuperate the *chigo's* agency, then it is hoped that this analysis has provided a more positive reading that empowers the *chigo* on his own terms.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

In the first chapter I attempted to describe how certain background discourses have shaped the way in which the figure of the *chigo* and the story tradition centered around him, the *chigo monogatari*, have come to be perceived in scholarship. In the second chapter, I argued that the *chigo's* ambiguous and fluid gender identity in *Chigo imamaiiri* allows us to see how the stories participate in Buddhist discourses of gender, which in turn complicate the extent to which we can understand *chigo*-monk relationships as homosexual, and may even raise doubt about the degree to which the less loaded term, male-male sex, is applicable. I also hope to show that in over-emphasizing the rhetorical gestures of their hypothetical authors, the degree to which the tales participate in oppressive discourses that impact more than just *chigo* and monk becomes glossed over. In my final chapter I showed how different conceptions of childhood and sonhood in particular, that extended across sectarian, historical, and geographic boundaries, provide us with a means of reading the *chigo's* apotheosis in new light. By detecting these discourses of Buddhist childhood in the tales, I showed how the tendency for *chigo* to become bodhisattvas can be read at face value, and to this degree might also be understood to resist the way historical monks subjected the *chigo* to sexual violence, if only upon the page of tales. Further, by placing the *chigo* within the role of disciple-son to a monk-father, the tales provide an alternative to Buddhist doctrine that only extends a model of salvific child-parent relationships to mother-son ones.

In all chapters, it was my goal to illustrate how certain readings of *chigo monogatari* have become normative, and how, we might begin the work of expanding

and adding on to these potentially reductive interpretations. Another of my goals was to illustrate that the symbolic and figurative significance of the *chigo monogatari*, the trope of the *chigo* deployed by them, are not secondary to historicist interpretations that regard the tales as sites for positivistic description of historical realities. In the case of Faure and Atkins, these historical realities can also be understood at the level of ideology and discourse, which are also deployed within particular moments and times. They historicize the background discourses of sexual rhetoric and images of sacrifice, and show that if the tales are not able to mirror historical reality in the sense of corresponding one-to-one with actual events, they are nevertheless able to mirror how historical actors may have attempted to use them in their agendas. But if Buddhist discourses are historically contingent, and if the kinds of expression that these discourses find can be expanded to vernacular literature, then surely more than one strand of Buddhist discourse is contained in the tale. It is to this end that I have found the side-by-side analysis of the tales with discourses other than Buddhist sexual rhetoric to be useful in understanding what else the tales might offer.

By no means is this a comprehensive reinterpretation of the *chigo monogatari*. Instead I hope to provide a provisional attempt to rethink the tales that might allow for new avenues of future research. For example, we might further attempt to unpack the notion of sacred children on its own terms. The art historical record provides a variety of ways to discuss the development of this discourse. As art historian, Tsuda Tetsuei has shown, a long tradition of iconographically depicting the sacredness of children existed within the medieval period<sup>125</sup>. Tsuda surveys a wide range of images, including

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<sup>125</sup> Tsuda, Tetsuei. *Chūsei No Dōjigyo*. Tōkyō: Shibundō, 2003.



depictions of Prince Shotoku as a child. Interestingly, even as he enters adulthood, images of Shotoku often had a recurring motif of two children flanking him on either side, and is later mirrored in images of the Amida Buddha greeting practitioners upon their entry into the Pure Land, also flanked by incredibly similar looking children. He also surveys analogous Shinto traditions that may have developed non-Buddhist understandings that remained influential in the understanding of children as sacred.

Another direction might be to understand how *chigo monogatari* can assist in understanding the increasingly important discipline of childhood studies, and the related subtopic of children and Buddhism. While we focused on an understanding of childhood that did not hinge on chronological age, the study of very young children and Buddhism has increasingly become a topic of interest to researchers in the past decade. In addition, we also might be able to understand this cluster of related issues - childhood, Buddhism, and *chigo monogatari* - with respect to the workings of childhood studies.

Methodologically, the discipline begins from the premise that childhood, as with any other historically contingent identity, is a product of the culture and times in which such identities are inscribed. While such a gesture is now familiar with respect to class, racial, sexual, and gendered identities, it has only been in the past two decades or so that similar moves have been taken into consideration in the analysis of childhood. Some of the work of childhood studies comes in mirroring particular claims of Second Wave feminism, especially Simone de Beauvoir, in that it seeks to show how the culturally determined meaning of childhood, like gender, is essentialized on the basis of biology and physiology. As Heather Montgomery writes: "[while childhood studies] acknowledges that children undergo recognizable patterns of physical and psychological development,

[it] argues that the meanings given to these vary enormously within and between cultures"<sup>126</sup>. If we take it further, we might see how the child's body is seen as essentially vulnerable, in need of protection, or unblemished, which might also correspond to more value laden constructions of childhood including the idea that childhood is a biological and developmental stage prior to, and therefore subordinate, to adulthood, or that children are "pure" or innocent. An analysis of childhood and *chigo* centered on chronologically defined parameters could usefully expand the scope of childhood studies to Japanese Buddhism and vernacular literature.

Finally, we might also attempt to understand how *chigo monogatari* stand in relation to a wider range of vernacular and literary writings in medieval Japan. For example, looking at legendary and mythologized accounts of Shotoku and Yoshitsune might give us a wider picture of what ideal childhood looks like then in a strictly Buddhist milieu as we have chosen to do here. Furthermore we could include analyses of other forms of *chigo* narratives, such as those that appear in *not* drama, a direction that Atkins points out, but does not fully flesh out. We might also more systematically link motifs in the *chigo monogatari*, especially images of courtship and description of the beloved, to norms in Heian courtly literature. For now, I hope, some of the work necessary to pave the way for this, and other future avenues of research has become more viable in our project to rethink the tales.

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<sup>126</sup> Montgomery, Heather. *An Introduction to Childhood: Anthropological Perspectives on Children's Lives*. Chichester, West Sussex, U.K: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, p. 1.

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