Chigo Monogatari

Love Stories or Buddhist Sermons?

by MARGARET H. CHILDS

In medieval Japan, the term chigo referred to boys between the ages of about seven and fourteen who resided in temples as though at a boarding school. A second meaning of chigo was youths involved in homosexual relationships with priests. It seems that the Buddhist priests who taught these boys in secluded mountain temples were relatively safe from the temptations of women, but were susceptible to the charms of the chigo who lived in their midst. A popular saying, Ichigochigo ni sanmō ('Chigo come first, the god of the mountain, second'), reflects the prevalence of sexual relationships between priests and chigo.

Fictionalized accounts of such love affairs, most dating from the Muromachi period and authored by priests, have come down to us from the medieval period in enough quantity for modern scholars to identify them as a genre called chigo monogatari. Araki Yoshio defines the genre as 'love stories focused on chigo' in his dictionary of medieval literature. Although most of these stories conclude on a religious note (the tragic end of a love affair causes the protagonist to turn to religion), Araki dismisses the religious content of the tales as ‘justification’ and ‘pretext’ for a central interest in love. Ichijo Teiji concurs with Araki, suggesting that the priests authored these tales out of a need to rationalize and excuse their inordinate interest in chigo. He claims that medieval priests, believing homosexuality to be unethical and unnatural, defended their behavior with the argument that the end, a religious awakening, justified the means, a homosexual love affair.

There is, however, no trace in the tales themselves that homosexuality per se met with disapproval. It was, at least, no more immoral for a priest than heterosexual relations, and certainly not a moral issue for a layman. The basic problem in Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari ('A Long Tale for an Autumn Night'), for example, is

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1 種子
5 Ichigo Teiji 伊地知貞次, Chōsei Shōsetsu no Kenkyu 中世小説研究, Tokyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1955, p. 137.

Although the identity of the authors of chigo monogatari is not known, it is generally assumed that they were Buddhist priests. Ichiko, pp. 129–30.
a priest's failure to make a genuine commitment to his faith. This failure takes the form of his falling in love with a young boy; but the problem which shapes the plot of the tale is not the priest's homosexuality, but the fact that his lover belongs to a rival temple.

Homosexual relationships were common and conventional in medieval Japan, and subordinate characters in chigo monogatari actively support such liaisons of the principals. The brevity of the relationships in the tales does not signify antipathy for homosexuality. Frustrated love was a popular theme in medieval Japanese literature, and heterosexual love affairs also typically ended in separation or death.

Of course any romance was wrong for a priest, whether homosexual or heterosexual. The Buddhist aim of release from attachments to this world is hardly furthered by sexual desire, let alone by a passionate love affair. Priests struggled with the conflict between worldly desires represented by chigo and religious aspirations. For priests, the only happy ending was the victory of religion. More often than not, a religious awakening (hosshin) is the climax and the didactic message of chigo monogatari, not merely a superficial justification.

Chigo monogatari seem to have been grouped together because of a modern view of homosexuality as aberrant and hence the most significant characteristic on which to base classification. This brief study will concentrate on the religious elements in chigo monogatari in an effort to re-evaluate the genre, and will examine the relationship of chigo monogatari to other types of Japanese literature with this religious issue in mind.

Life in many Buddhist temples in medieval Japan was religious in form but not always in spirit, and priests often selected their careers for reasons unrelated to religion. Even though they ostensibly renounced the secular world, many priests became deeply involved in political and military affairs. Lack of religious discipline was a common and persistent problem in temples and nunnaries and, because of their hypocritical ways of life, priests and nuns were often the target of satirical literary attacks, such as those made in Konjaku Monogatari and Uji Shūi Monogatari. Inevitably there were those who were perturbed by their own hypocrisy and were prime for religious experiences. As in chigo monogatari, their response to the death of a lover, therefore, might be to realize that life is transient and to take that realization as the catalyst for hosshin, which is the beginning of a sincere and strenuous effort to attain enlightenment.

The contention that the religious conclusions of the tales of chigo are artificial contrivances designed to exonerate the 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. This keen appreciation of

7 無常
8 今昔物語, a collection of tales compiled in the late 11th century; 寺治拾遺物語, a collection of tales compiled in the early 13th century.
transience is a quality that *chigo monogatari* share with medieval war tales (gunki monogatari).

Although war tales were composed to entertain with stirring descriptions of glory and honor, they contain the same sober message of transience found in *chigo monogatari*. For example, as it traces the rise and fall of the proud Taira clan, *Heike Monogatari*, a war tale of the early thirteenth century, warns that success is transient. One after the other, those Taira nobles who survive take the tonsure; the widows of the slain also don the black robes of renunciation. Glory and pride in war tales meet the same fate as love in *chigo monogatari*.

Large-scale battles and vendettas carried out single-handedly supply a substantial amount of violence in *chigo monogatari*. Sudden death by violence is transience in its most painful form. This type of transience, characteristic of war tales, is deftly joined in such *chigo monogatari* as *Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari* to a concept of transience as it is revealed in tragic love affairs.

Araki traces the origin of *chigo monogatari* to the Heian-period love tale, but their debt to Heian literature seems limited to style. While the language which is used in *chigo monogatari* to describe romantic encounters echoes that of Heian love tales, the essential theme of the latter, a bittersweet sense of *mono no aware* (pathos), has given way to the more powerful, tragic concept of transience, a concept used in *chigo monogatari* for religious purposes.

Eight tales are included in the *chigo monogatari* genre. The best known of these is *Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari*; the archetype of the genre, it dates from at least 1377 and is translated below. The centrality of the religious issue is immediately established by the Buddhist sermon with which it opens. Furthermore, we first meet the protagonist when he is agonizing over his failure to practice his faith sincerely and he encounters the *chigo* with whom he falls in love on his return from a pilgrimage undertaken to receive the inspiration needed for enlightenment. The tale then describes his courtship with the youth, the joy and sorrow of their meetings and partings. The love affair turns into a disaster when the *chigo* is kidnapped by goblins and the priests of Miidera blame the monks of Mt Hiei. The subsequent destruction of Miidera by the monks of Mt Hiei arouses the same appreciation of transience as that found in war tales, and the *chigo*’s suicide is the concrete example of it that triggers a religious awakening in the protagonist. In conclusion, the whole affair is attributed to the goddess Ishiyama Kannon as the means that she chose to effect one priest’s salvation. *Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari* is entertaining as a rich and vigorous tale, but its religious theme, so intimately woven into the tale, seems primary.

Of particular interest is a second *chigo monogatari*, *Gemmu Monogatari* ('The Tale of Gemmu', at latest 1485), which has surely been misrepresented by Araki.

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11 Ichiko Teiji, ed., *Otogi Zōshi* 御伽草子 (NKB 38), Iwanami Shoten, 1965, p. 20; the text of *Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari* is given on pp. 460-85.
12 幻夢物語
when he asserts that it is a romance in which Buddhist elements merely provide a framework.\textsuperscript{13} Araki has overlooked the role of violence in \textit{Gemu Monogatari} which contributes to its theme of transience, as well as the religious meaning of the romantic encounter between Gemmu and his lover’s ghost.

In \textit{Gemu Monogatari}, Gemmu, a priest from Ōhara, north of Kyoto, falls in love with Hanamatsu, a boy of about fifteen who has come to the capital from Nikkō for a brief stay. Some time after Hanamatsu returns to Mt Nikkō, Gemmu undertakes the long journey to visit his lover, but loses his way on the slopes of the mountain. Hanamatsu finds Gemmu and leads him to his temple, but disappears after a night of reminiscing. In the morning, Gemmu learns that Hanamatsu has been dead for seventeen days; having carried out a vendetta to avenge his father, who had died on the battlefield some years previously, Hanamatsu was slain by his victim’s son. Gemmu had passed the night with his spirit.

Gemu’s reaction to the trauma is to take up a life of religious devotion on Mt Kōya. On the anniversary of Hanamatsu’s death, Gemmu meets a young priest in deep mourning, who he discovers to be the youth who slew Hanamatsu. This youth had renounced the world when, having killed Hanamatsu, he saw that his victim was just a boy like himself. Thereafter Gemmu and the youth spend their days reciting the \textit{nembutsu} together. A postscript explains that Hanamatsu was a manifestation of the bodhisattva Monju, who has thus succeeded in leading two people to religious awakening.\textsuperscript{14}

For two people, in different ways, the death of the youthful Hanamatsu has religious implications. Moreover, Gemmu’s experience of spending a night with a ghost without realizing it shows that reality cannot be distinguished from illusion. This is the tale’s religious message. If \textit{Gemu Monogatari} is a romance, it is a disappointing one. It becomes a moving tale only when we accept its religious significance.

The remaining six \textit{chigo monogatari}—\textit{Ashibiki, Hanamitsu, Matsuho no Ura Monogatari, Toribeyama Monogatari, Saga Monogatari,} and \textit{Ben no Sōshi}\textsuperscript{15}—all date from the Muromachi period, and the relative importance of their religious and romantic elements varies greatly. \textit{Ashibiki} describes the vicissitudes of a love affair almost thwarted by a malicious stepmother; the \textit{chigo} and his lover survive an assassination attempt, but the \textit{chigo} is moved by his hard experiences to

\textsuperscript{13} Araki, \textit{Muromachi Jidai Bungaku}, p. 251.


\textit{Gemu Monogatari} is probably indebted to \textit{Heike Monogatari} for the theme of religious awakening inspired by having been forced to slay a young boy. In \textit{Heike}, Kumagai Naozane of the Minamoto clan overcomes in battle Taira no Atsumori, a boy no older than his own son. He would spare the youth, but he is forced to stifle his compassion by the approach of other Minamoto warriors. After striking off the boy’s head, Kumagai abandons the battlefield to wander as a priest praying for Atsumori’s deliverance.


\textsuperscript{15} あしひき, 花みつ, 松帆浦物語, 鳥部山物語, 岬峨物語, 萬草子
renounce the world. There is no specific romantic interest in \textit{Hanamitsu}, which relates the problems caused by Hanamitsu's stepmother that lead him to commit suicide; this in turn triggers a religious awakening in his father and stepbrother. Although \textit{Matsuho no Ura Monogatari} and \textit{Toribeyama Monogatari} also end on a religious note, they are simpler stories in which romance plays the major role. \textit{Saga Monogatari} and \textit{Ben no Sōshi} are love stories without religious import.

Despite these major differences, these eight tales have been grouped together as \textit{chigo monogatari}, a genre based on little more than the homosexuality of the main characters. Modern antipathy toward homosexuality has obscured the real intent of some of the tales. They could be better understood if they were not grouped together as a genre, since two of them are simply entertaining love stories while the remaining six are didactic literature, in five of which love stories are used to present a religious lesson. These exploit the elegant style of Heian-period love tales, but, with some action and drama, they develop the concept of transience as experienced by Buddhist priests in the same way as medieval war tales reveal its meaning for warriors. The tales should be judged according to the motivations that inspired their composition, for the priests who wrote them were creating a literature relevant to their own experience, stories that depict a religious response to the tragedies of life.
A Long Tale for an Autumn Night

Aki no Yo no Nagamonogatari

Now, the blossoming of trees in spring increases the tendency to aspire to supreme enlightenment, and as the autumn moon sinks to the bottom of the water it symbolizes the salvation of all beings. Heaven is without words, but all things point out its reality. Is it not human nature to strive tirelessly? If people witness the eight kinds of suffering and weary of this corrupt world, they will realize that illusions and Buddhahood are one. If they hear of the five signs of death of celestial beings and seek the Pure Land, they will realize that samsāra is nirvana. When the bodhisattvas all come to make manifest the path to enlightenment, they will lead us out of wrong into right if we have transgressed, and even though we may have little inclination to be so led they will steer us out of evil into goodness. The commentaries on the sūtras and the śāstras and old texts describe the infinite variety of means by which this [exodus from evil] may be accomplished.

Recently I have heard something very strange, enough, indeed, to make you raise your heads from your pillows. I shall tell you a long tale for an autumn night to keep you company in the sleeplessness of old age.

I should mention that this is a story of long ago. There was a person known in the world as the holy man Sensai, of Mt Nishi, who was proficient in both religious practices and scholarship. Formerly he had been a priest of the Eastern Pagoda of Mt Hiei and was called Master Keikai, councilor at the Kangaku'in.

16 Jōgubodai 上求菩提
17 Gekeshūjō 下化衆生. A bodhisattva, or one destined for enlightenment, by definition performs both Jōgubodai and Gekeshūjō, the first out of personal interest, the second altruistically.
18 Hakku 八苦: the pain of birth, old age, sickness, death, separation from loved ones, meeting with hated ones, unfulfilled desires, and attachment.
19 Edo 徳土, in contrast to Jōdo 徳土, the Pure Land.
20 Bonno soku bodai 順随菩提 (the text substitutes soku for soku 即).
This is an expression of the profoundest truth of the Mahayana tradition, that to discern illusion is to approach enlightenment.

21 Tennin no gosui 天人ノ五衰
22 Shōji soku nehan 生死即呪攀. Samsāra is the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, while nirvana is extinction, that is, the state of extinguishing all illusions and eliminating the causes of rebirth.
23 Sensai shōnin 西上人 was a priest (d. ca. 1127) who established Ungoji 霊居寺 on Mt Higashi. He was a noted artist and poet, and his poem which appears in Shinkokushū 平1778 is given below on p. 24.
24 西山, located north of Kyoto in present-day Sakyoku, near Iwakura.
25 Risshī 律師, a teacher of the precepts or interpreter of the vinaya.
26 勧学院, a building in a temple complex where religious instruction is given.
Of all the Buddhist scriptures, he dipped from the stream of the Tendai tradition and looked steadily at the moon of the four teachings and three insights. As for Confucianism, he trod the path of Huang Shih-kung, and flew the banner of nōsa and haisui. 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. Indeed clergy and laity alike relied on him. He was a true master of both the literary and military arts.

One day, in the prime of life, he awakened from a restless night of dreams of falling blossoms and scattering leaves. ‘What is wrong?’ he thought. ‘I have renounced the world and entered Shakamuni’s gate, yet night and day 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. If only I could leave here soon, go deep into the mountains, and build a retreat, a hut of brushwood. However, it is difficult to leave places to which one has long-standing ties, and my karmic relationship with the Bodhisattva Yakushi and Hie Sannō is also hard to set aside.’

Since separation from the priests with whom he practiced and lived would be painful, he aimlessly passed some considerable time until his heart stirred him to express his feelings aloud.

Morning and night in the depths of this filthy world
I have lost the Way and lived in error for thirty years.
When will I be free from censure and praise
To watch clouds from the shade of an old pine and sleep peacefully?

I. It may be that the reason such a fervent wish had not been answered was that some evil spirit was obstructing him. Keikai had gone to Ishiyama, thinking that, if such were the case, he would enlist the aid of the Bodhisattva [Kannon] in order to realize his hopes. For seventeen days he would prostrate himself and with single-minded sincerity pray that his heart be made firm so that he might soon attain supreme enlightenment.

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27 Literally, ‘the tradition of Yu ch’uan 玉泉’, a temple east of Yu ch’uan mountain where Chi-chê (J. Chisha) 智者, the founder of T‘en-t’ai Buddhism, lived.
28 Shikyō sankan 四教三觀. The four teachings are the four methods of enlightenment—direct or sudden, gradual, esoteric, and variable. The three insights are the study of the concepts that all things are immaterial or void, that all things are unreal or transient, and a middle ground, consideration of both concepts.
29 黃石公, J. Kōsekikō, a mountain hermit famous for having given Chang Liang 張良, d. 168 B.C., a book on military tactics.
30 蓼砂, 青水. The former is a battle tactic by which a river is dammed with sandbags, which are then removed when the enemy tries to cross the dry bed. Haisui is a tactic by which an army camps with a body of water to the rear so that the soldiers cannot retreat.
31 In the text, Tō 銀王 and Sannō 山王. The bodhisattva Yakushi 楚山 is the central object of worship at Enryakuji, while Sannō is the corresponding Shinto deity.
32 石山, that is, Ishiyama Temple, located to the west of the River Seta and south of Lake Biwa; founded in 749, its principal deity is Kannon.
On the evening of the seventh day [of his vigil], he pillowed his head on the
dais, and while he dozed, he dreamed that a beautiful youth of indescribably noble
appearance emerged from behind the brocade curtain in the chapel [and went to]
stand in the shade of a cherry tree whose blossoms fell in confusion about him. He
wore a robe embroidered with a pattern of green leaves. It seemed to Keikai that
cherry trees were in bloom again on a distant mountain. Petals drifted down on the
youth like snow, and gathering them in his sleeves, he disappeared into the growing
dusk as if unaware of the direction he was taking. When he realized that the youth
had vanished, Keikai awoke from his dream.

II. JOYFULLY convinced this vision was a portent that his prayer would be
granted, he arose and departed before dawn had tinted the eastern clouds. [Back on
Mt Hiei,] Keikai waited for faith to arise at any moment as though he expected
something from outside himself. His resolution to live deep in the mountains had
vanished completely, and the image of the boy whom he had seen in the dream
never left him for a moment. Since the youth was not real, Keikai was unable to
endure the futility of his thoughts and sought to console himself by burning
incense and facing the image of the Buddha. He experienced the feelings of the Han
Emperor Wu33 whose dead wife, Empress Li, appeared in the smoke of the
Incense of Recall. Standing under the clouds in the lonely mountains gazing at
blossoms, King Hsiang34 had helplessly mourned the memory of his dream of the
Goddess of Mount Wu, who had changed herself into cloud and rain. The king’s
tears were as Keikai’s own.

‘According to the oracle of Hie Sannō’, he thought desolately, ‘to lose even
one priest like me is as painful as swallowing a three-foot-long sword, blade first.
Perhaps Hie Sannō regrets my leaving the mountain and is obstructing my
attainment of faith. Even though that may be his intention, only alive can I
confront the dimming of the lamp of Buddhism and brighten it. My life will not
last as long as the dew which does not await evening [to vanish]. This is the end of
me.’

He decided to return to Ishiyama to complain to Kannon there.

III. PASSING by Miidera the Master felt the first drops of a sudden spring drizzle
on his face. Intending to take shelter for a while, he descended the slope toward
the main hall. The beautifully colored branches of an ancient tree in the garden of
of the priests’ quarters of the Shōgo’in35 rose cloudlike above the fence. Recalling
the lines, ‘Catching sight of blossoms at a house in the distance, I went there
directly’,36 he approached the gate, where he saw a youth of about sixteen. He
was wearing a gossamer robe embroidered with a design of waves and fishes over

33 武帝, r. 140–86 B.C.
34 繁王, who reigned during the period of
the Warring States.
35 僧護院, a sub-temple of Miidera.
36 This poem is found in Wakan Rōeishū
和漢詠集 #115, a collection of Chinese and
Japanese poems compiled in 1013 by Fuji-
wara Kintō 藤原公任, 966–1041.
an undergarment of pale crimson, the skirts of which fell long and gracefully from his slender hips. Evidently unaware that he was being watched, the boy came out from behind the bamboo screen into the garden and broke a spray of blossoms from a branch which hung low as though heavily laden with snow. He murmured,

Though they drench me with the fallen rain,
I will gather these blossom clouds
Before they scatter in the wind.

To the Master the youth himself seemed a flower. Alarmed that the wind might lure this blossom away, he wished that his sleeves were large enough to shelter it. He felt that he should lend his feelings to the clouds and mist. Pressed by a heartless wind, a door creaked and the youth looked around suspiciously, wondering if someone was there. As he walked softly around the game court with the blossoms in his hand the ends of his long hair, swaying as gracefully as sea grasses, became entangled in the branches of a willow and held him bound. He turned around abstractedly, and the Master saw the very face, the same expression that, ever since his dream, had so captivated him that he had not known where he was. The present reality drove that night’s vision from his mind; and even though it had grown dark, he did not think of returning home. That night he lay down on the veranda of the main hall and remained lost in melancholy reverie until dawn.

37 *Kakari no moto* カカリノ本. A kemari 関戸 court is a square area in which court football was played; a willow tree marked the southeast corner of the court.
IV. At dawn, when the Master went back and stood near the same place [as the night before], a very sweet-looking boy came out through the gate to throw away some wash water. Thinking this might be the attendant of the youth he had seen the day before, the Master approached him.

'May I have a word with you?' he said.

'What is it?' the boy casually replied.

'Yesterday', said the Master overjoyed, 'I caught a glimpse of a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old youth here wearing a robe of wave-and-fish design. I wonder if you might know who he is.'

'I am his attendant!' the boy laughed. 'His name is Lord Umewaka, and his father is the Hanazono Minister of the Left. His is a rare nature; he is so naïve as to be unaware of deceit in the world. Thus all the priests of this temple, old and young alike, notice the late spring blossoms of this one tree and do not want them to fall out of reach. The radiance of our house is like the light of the mid-autumn moon which fills every corner and is thus the object of the priests' competition. But the discipline is strict, and since coming here, he does not go out except for musical gatherings. He always shuts himself up in an inner room and idly passes the days and months composing Chinese verse and reciting Japanese poems.'

Hearing this, the Master was all the more fascinated. Immediately he wanted to send the youth a letter via this boy conveying what was in his heart; but that would have been much too forward and he returned to Mt Hiei without visiting Ishiyama.

V. Distracted by the memories of both the dream and the reality, the Master passed his nights and days in a daze, neither awake nor asleep. He sought out an old acquaintance who lived near the Shōgo'in and more and more often spent a night or two there. Sometimes his pretense was a poetry contest, sometimes a banquet. Later, on the occasion of an intimate conversation with Keiju, [the young Lord's attendant,] having entertained the boy with tea and sake, the Master presented him with a golden mandarin-orange branch and ten variously scented robes of sheer silk. The boy observed how deep the Master's feelings were and

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Nuki no shite naru midori, literally, 'water under a bamboo mat'. The mat was to prevent water in a washbowl from splashing out.

花園, an area in northeast Kyoto.

A reference to the young Lord.

That is to say, his beauty is recognized by everyone and all compete for his affections.

Tsubo no ishibumi 壺ノ石文, a phrase used here to mean a letter, but in fact referring to the stone monument erected by Sakonoue no Tamuramaro in 757–810, when he succeeded in subjugating the Ezo.
sympathized completely. The Master confessed that he could not imagine how
this spell that Lord Umewaka had cast over his heart could ever be broken.
‘First of all,’ said Keiju, ‘write him a letter. I’ll deliver it and we’ll see what
happens.’
But however densely the Master might cover a page with words, he could
never express fully the love in his heart. And so he wrote only this poem:

Would that you knew
My captivated heart is a cloud
Attendant upon dimly spied blossoms.

VI. The boy slipped the letter at his breast from the folds of his robe. ‘Look at
this,’ he said. ‘When you were standing under the dripping blossoms during a
pause in the rain, a gentleman of sensibility caught an indistinct glimpse of you.
He has fallen in love with you without even having met you. The color of his
sleeves is deepening with the incessant tears that tell of his love.’

The young Lord blushed. As he began to untie the ribbon [that bound the
letter], the floorboards in the corridor squeaked, announcing the approach of a
high-ranking priest.\(^{43}\) The young Lord thrust the letter into his sleeve, not wanting
him to see it. Keiju decided to await a better opportunity. Soon after, when he
came to attend the young Lord that evening, the youth slid his answer out
through the study window. The boy was so pleased that the letter felt weightless in
his hand as he hurried to deliver it. The Master’s eyes flashed with joy. He could
hardly contain himself as he opened the missive. It was not a letter but a poem.

I do not trust your love,
Your heart is a fleeting cloud
Shadowing a blossom.

VII. As he read these lines, the Master was deeply moved and even less inclined
to return home. He knew it was inevitable that they should part without meeting,
yet though he could only gaze at the branches from without, he wanted to stay
nearby for a time. But since even that would have been too obvious, he took leave
of Keiju and returned to the mountain, intending to come back another time.
[As he proceeded slowly], glancing back at every other step, it grew dark before
he could reach lodging in nearby Sakamoto\(^{44}\) even though it had been a long
spring day. He lodged in a small, humble house near Totsu.\(^{45}\)

Having lain awake the whole night lost in thought, he stepped out into the
garden the next morning expecting to ascend the mountain. He was restrained,
however, by a heart not his own, as though a rope manned by a thousand was tied

\(^{43}\) Sōzu 僧都, a high-ranking priest with supervisory powers over other monks.
\(^{44}\) 坂本, a town on the eastern slopes of Mt Hiei
\(^{45}\) 戸津, a fishing village on the shore of Lake Biwa below Sakamoto.
about his waist. From Totsu he wandered absent-mindedly back toward Ōtsu. He was wearing a straw coat for protection from the gentle rain. As he went along, disguised in traveling clothes, he met a lone horseman hunched under an umbrella. Wondering who it might be, he glanced at the rider and saw it was Keiju.

'How strange!' exclaimed Keiju on recognizing the Master. 'I was just on my way to the mountain with a message for you. Since I don't know the way, this is a very happy coincidence indeed.' He leaped down from his horse, took the Master's hand, and led him to a nearby roadside shrine.

'What is the matter?' asked the Master.

Keiju took out a letter wrapped in very dark paper. It had been so scorched with incense that the sleeve in which it had been tucked had absorbed the scent. Keiju explained that he had been directed to find the Master no matter how deep into the mountains he had to wander and whatever the unknown terrain.

'It's scandalous how he has lost his head over you,' he laughingly teased the Master. 'How much heavier will be the dew on his sleeves should you spend a night with him.'

'If only he would lament our parting,' retorted the Master. Then he read the poem,

I begrudge my own heart,
Ignorant of falsehood
And too trusting.

VIII. 'I know a priest who lives nearby,' said the boy encouragingly. 'Lodge there awhile and wait for an opportunity to visit the young Lord.'

Spurred on by his love, the Master proceeded again to Miidera. Keiju made arrangements for him to stay in a study at a priest's residence for a short time. The Master passed the day enjoying the gracious hospitality of the priest there, who summoned a continuous stream of youths to perform concerts and participate in poetry-judging contests. Under the pretext that he had a petition to present to Shinra Daimyōjin and would perform vigils for the deity for seven days, the Master went secretly to the Shōgo'in and when night came hid himself in the garden in the shade of the pines and amidst dew-laden grasses. Aware of the Master's presence, the young Lord hoped for a chance to slip away unseen. It was painful for the Master to see the youth at his wits' end as they waited in vain, but he had vowed to be content just to see the youth. Since this love was his life, he came and went day after day until more than ten days had passed.

46 大津, a city on the southern shore of Lake Biwa, near Miidera.
47 Goren no hima o mo onkokoro ni kake- rare serrakashi 御縁ノヒマモ御心ヲ接檻ヘ
48 Shinra大明神, the patron deity of Miidera.

47 カシ, 'wait for a crack in the bamboo screen'; that is, wait for a chance for the young Lord to emerge from behind his screens.
Although the Master had been invited to stay with the priest as long as he liked, he could not impose himself forever. Yet just when he had decided to return to Mt Hiei on the following morning, Keiju arrived with a message.

'A guest from the capital is here and they are holding a banquet. The chief priest is terribly drunk. I have been told to remain in attendance until late tonight and then to bring my lord here secretly. Wait for us, and don’t latch your gate,’ said the boy hurriedly as he left.

IX. The Master’s heart leaped when he heard these words, and he became delirious with joy. The bells sounded hour upon lonely hour, and the moon had circled round to the south before he heard the sound of someone opening the gate. Through the paper door of the study he saw Keiju at a distance carrying a gyone lantern of fireflies. The young Lord’s gossamer robe shone in the dim greenish light as he stood shyly under a tree. The Master was spellbound at the sight of him framed by the tangle of willow branches. Although real, it all seemed a dream.

Keiju approached first and hung the fireflies on the screen-support under the eaves. He knocked softly at the door of the study and announced their arrival, but the Master could only move to one side in a speechless reply. The boy went back to the garden to tell the young Lord to come quickly. The youth came in first through the paneled door. Wearing the fragrance which the Master had known only from a distance, the young Lord now stood close enough to touch. When the youth leaned forward slightly, the Master saw that a flower might envy the beauty of his hair, which was gracefully tied with fresh cords, and the curve of his blackened eyebrows, and that the moon might covet his white complexion. A brush could not portray nor words express the compliments the youth deserved.

They wept as they opened their hearts to each other. Sincere were the vows they exchanged as they lay together. Nor were their sweet words of love exhausted when, in the cold [morning] room, their dreams were suddenly shattered. Short of time, their tears impossible to quench, they listened resentfully to the chirruping of a bird perched on a bamboo branch that announced the break of day. Moist with tears, their robes were cold to the touch as they stood to part. The light of the dawn moon broke into the room from the west window. In the youth’s eyes, framed by his sleep-tousled hair, was a slightly bewildered look. At this sight and at the thought of how he would miss the youth, the Master felt that he could not survive a separation.

49 魚聞, the material used for lantern windows; it is made by boiling fish brains and shaping them into translucent sheets.
50 Kawashima no negare mo asakarano 川場ノ流も浅カラヌ, ‘the stream which flows around islands in the river is not shallow.’ The word Kawashima has a double function, meaning ‘river islands’ and also substituting for kawasu, ‘to exchange vows’.
X. The Master saw the young Lord off and then remained outside until dawn. While he still stood in the gate, Keiju returned with a letter. It said only:

In the tears of parting
Caught by my sleeve,
The wan morning moon.

The Master went in.

Not brushing away the dew on my sleeve
In which the moon we viewed together is reflected,
How many nights will I grieve till morning?

XI. Although he could not tell whether his memories were of a dream or of reality, the Master cherished them. His sleeve had absorbed the fragrance that the youth had worn so he thought of it as a memento. He returned to Mt Hiei so dejected that he was incapable of responding to anyone or anything. He could not bear to be seen with the tears streaming down his face—and his drenched sleeves were likely to rot—and so he announced that he was ill. He refused to see anyone and passed the days in despondency.

When the young Lord heard this news from Keiju, he was deeply concerned about the Master and appeared all the more downcast. The youth waited, secretly expecting an imminent message. But when too many days had passed, he called Keiju to him.

‘Although that night was like a dream, I have not received a word from him since,’ he declared bitterly, tears streaming from his eyes. ‘Has he grown cold-hearted? If we continue like this, we will become alienated from each other. The wind asks how long the dew lingers [, implying that he is ill]. If he should pass away, my future is nothing. Although I yearn to go and visit him, however deep in the mountains he is, if I go without leaving word, I will be criticized for disregarding the wishes of the chief priest; and that cannot be allowed to happen. You are the one who encouraged me to believe the words of a fickle stranger and thus kindled the love in my heart for him! Take me to him at once, no matter where or how far it may be!’

When a still childish and impressionable heart falls in love for the first time, there is simply nothing to be done. Understanding full well the truth in what the young Lord said, the boy lied: ‘I know just where he is. Of course I will take you to him. The chief priest will be displeased, but I will make some excuse later.’ Thus the two of them set out, ignorant of their destination.

XII. Being of noble blood, the young Lord had always traveled in luxurious carriages drawn by fine horses, and he had never muddied his feet. Now his steps

51 *Hito ni mata naku omitsukinaru wa* 人はマタナク思と付キヌルハ、 that is, a person falling in love with someone more deeply than he will ever love another.
faltering and his heart wearied, and at last he was unable to go any further. Keiju pulled the young Lord along by the hand, but he too was exhausted and wished that someone, even a goblin or ghost, would pick them up and take them to Mt Hiei. While they rested under the pines at Karasaki, their hearts only troubled the more by the sight of the moon in the lake, an aged yamabushi riding in a shishi palanquin stopped in front of them. When he asked their destination, Keiju answered him candidly.

'It happens that I am going very near the temple you are visiting,' said the yamabushi, alighting. 'Since you look so fatigued, let me walk. Please ride in my palanquin.'

He helped them in, the twelve bearers lifted it, and then they seemed to fly like birds passing over a vast lake and breaking through dark clouds. In a moment they arrived at Shakagadake in Ōmine. Here the young Lord and Keiju were thrown into a cave which was shut up with a huge boulder. There was no telling night from day; not a ray of moon or sun could they see. Water trickled from the moss, wind raged in the pines, and their cheeks were not dry for a moment. They discovered that many priests and laypeople, men and women, had been captured, and in the gloom they could hear no other sound than that of weeping.

The young Lord's disappearance that night was no trivial matter. While the chief priest grieved, the other priests searched high and low. No one knew

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52 唐崎, a town on the shore of Lake Biwa, between Ōtsu and Sakamoto.
53 Shishōgo, a palanquin with bamboo screens on all four sides.
54 Shakagadake 釈迦ヶ嶺 is a peak in the Ōmine range, the headquarters of the yamabushi.
what might have happened to the youth until a traveler on his way from East Sakamoto to Otsu came along.

‘I met a youth such as you describe on the beach at Karasaki about ten o’clock last night,’ he told them.

Then hearing that a priest from Mt Hiei had recently pledged his love to the youth, they concluded that he was the one who must have abducted him. The chief priest’s dismay was extreme, and the gloom throughout the temple profound. As it was unthinkable that the 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. They made their attack in Sanjō kyōgoku in broad daylight. More than fifty of the Minister’s retainers fought bravely in defense, but they were no obstacle to the mob of priests, who succeeded in burning down every last structure, the passageways, tsuridono, izumidono, and even the tile-roofed verandas.

XIV. Even this act did not purge their rancor so they all conferred together. ‘This is the worst possible insult!’ they cried. ‘Mt Hiei will certainly be encouraged to advance against us if we construct a sanmaya ordination platform now. Then, with our topographical advantage we can destroy our enemy and at the same time suppress heterodoxy and propagate the Buddhist precepts. Heaven has provided this opportunity, we must not hesitate.’

Over two thousand priests agreed to the plan, and so they dug ditches along the road from Nyoigoe to Ōmi, erected a tower inside the temple precincts, and constructed a sanmaya ordination platform.

XV. Mt Hiei would doubtlessly launch an attack when they heard of what had been done. They had already confronted Miidera over the ordination platform issue six times before. There was no need to report to the court or to appeal to the military. Intending to waste no time in attacking and leveling Miidera, they sent official notices to their 3,703 branch temples and shrines. Supporters from neighboring districts amassed on the mountain, crowding it as far as Sakamoto. There would be no luckier day than the fifteenth of the tenth month, the Middle Day of the Monkey, so dividing their force of some hundred thousand horsemen into seven groups, they attacked both front and rear. Some rode their horses along the Karasaki beach in Shiga, spurred on by the wind; some poled boats across the wide hazy lake in the morning calm.

54 三条京極, the area where the easternmost avenue of Kyoto intersects the third ward.
55 釈殿, 泉殿, buildings attached to the main hall of a Heian noble’s residence.
56 Samnayakaidan 三摩耶威壇. Samnayakai are admonitions given in an ordination ceremony stressing the concept that the Buddhas and the people are equal and warning priests not to falter in their quest for enlightenment.
57 Naka no saru no hi 中ノ申ノ日. Saru, written 申, refers to the ninth branch in the system of counting cycles of sixty; saru, written 猿, means monkey, the messenger of Hie Sannō.
Among these men racing each in his own way into battle was Master Keikai. He felt that, since he was the cause of this calamity, he should lead an assault so that at least his name would survive. He drank sacred water together with five hundred followers, outstanding men of the temple, and they attacked from Nyoigoe before dawn. When all 107,000 raised the battle cry in unison, it seemed that great mountains would crumble, that vast lakes would be upended, and that men might fall into the bowels of the earth. In their onslaught they heedlessly trampled over the wounded and dead. The three branches of Mt Hiei attacked heroically with priests from Shuzen, Zenchi, Enshū’in, Sugifu, Seishō, Konron’in, Sugimoto, Sakamoto, and Myōkan’in of the Eastern Pagoda; Jōki, Jōjitsu, Nangan, Gyōsen, Gyōjū, and Jōrinbō of the Western Pagoda; and Zenhō, Zennō, and Hannya’in of Yokawa. 59

Among those who sallied forth in defense of Miidera were the Suruga Devil of Enman’in, 60 the Seven Goblins of Tō’in, 61 the Eight Strong Men of Minami no In, 62 the Sanuki Ruffian who had killed one thousand men, 63 the Kanasaiō-wielding Lawless Steward, 64 the Musashi Priest of Destruction, 65 the Engetsu

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59 All these are sub-temples of the samtō 三塔, or the three divisions of the monastic complex on Mt Hiei—the Eastern Pagoda 東塔, the Western Pagoda 西塔, and Yokawa 横川.

60 Enman’in no Onisuruga 円滿院ノ鬼獄河, the Devil of Suruga of Enman’in, a sub-temple of Miidera.

61 Tō’in no Shichtengu 唐院ノ七天狗, the Seven Goblins of Tō’in, a sub-temple of Miidera.

62 Minami no In no Hachikongō 南ノ院ノ八金剛, the Eight Strong Men of Minami no In, another sub-temple of Miidera.

63 Senningiri no Arasanuki 千人切ノ荒讃岐

64 Kanasaiō no Akutayū 金サヒ棒ノ悪太夫.

A kanasaiō is a type of metal stave, used as a weapon.

65 Happō Yaburi no Musashibō 八方破ノ武藏坊, the Musashi Priest who Spreads Destruction in Eight Directions.
Priest who could throw boulders three blocks, and the Priest Kaku who dangled his victims from his left hand while cutting their heads off with his right. They fought valiantly, their loyalty as steady as a rock, holding their lives no more dearly than dust. After three hours of fighting, of arrows piercing helmets and armor, of halberds swirling cloud-like around them, more than seven thousand of the attackers were wounded, and everyone was half dead with exhaustion. Still it seemed that the tower would never fall.

‘This is how cowards fight!’ Keikai shouted angrily. ‘This little ditch should be filled up with the dead [by now]. Is there some reason not to storm the tower? Those of you who care not for your lives, follow me and witness Keikai’s daring exploits!’

He leaped to the bottom of the V-shaped ditch, bounded up the steep twenty-foot bank, using the shields arrayed abacus-like as steps, and grasping an unlacquered fence post, jumped lightly over. One intruder among three hundred of the enemy, he dangled his foes from his left hand, slashing at them with his right. Some he cut diagonally from the shoulder, some he sliced at the waist. He poised to strike, then attacked as they retreated. As relentlessly as waves beating against the shore, he felled them one after the other with sweeping strokes. His sword described wild designs, crisscross patterns, spider shapes, twisted knots, and crosses. He swirled ceaselessly round and round and scattered them in all directions.

The three hundred men defending Nyoidake gave up all hope. They fled left and right. Keikai’s five hundred followers rushed about setting fire to all the temple buildings in all the valleys. An eerie wind blew steadily, but lingering smoke obscured the sight of the destruction of the main hall, the lecture hall, the bell house, the library, the Hall of Amida, the Hall of Buddhist Law, the Kyōtai Kashiō Residence, the Chapel of Chishō Daishi, and the three monzeki residences. In all, some three thousand seven hundred buildings were reduced to ashes in moments. Except for the shrine of Shinra Daimyōjin, not a single building was left standing.

XVI. Confined in his stone prison, forlorn and sobbing, the young Lord was ignorant of the fate of Miidera until he overheard a crowd of goblins gossiping about local affairs.

‘Devastating fires’, a small goblin remarked, ‘whirlwinds, petty disputes, arguments about sumo matches, rock-throwing contests at Shirakawa.’

66 Sanchō Tsuhute no Engetsu- ō Naka-Te- no- ri- foregoing. Engetsu is a sub-temple of Miidera.
67 Sagegiri Konomi no Kakuō 大切好ミノ 増.
68 教侍和尚ノ御本房, the Main Hall of the High Priest Kyōtai, a ninth-century priest of Miidera.

69 智澄大師ノ御影堂, the Chapel of Chishō Daishi, or Enchin 814–91.
70 冏跡, an imperial prince.
71 Shirakawa hoko no sora-inji 支川ホコノ空 印地. Shirakawa is a river running through Kyoto. According to Ichikō, Otoji Zōshi, p. 476, hoko might be a mistake for hotori.
mikoshi-carrying forays of the priests of Mt Hiei and Nara, the competition among the Gozan priests?—we take a special interest in such delightful scenes as these, but yesterday’s battle at Miidera was a matchless spectacle.’

‘How lucky it was to have nabbed this Lord Umewaka,’ another goblin nearby added. ‘If we hadn’t, what else could have started the fight? I’ve composed an amusing rhyme about the ridiculous sight of the temple priests running away helter-skelter, clutching the hems of their long silk robes.’

‘What is your poem?’ the assembly asked.

The Miidera monks are sorely disgraced;
They put up a platform,
Now they snivel shamefaced.

The goblins all laughed their approval. The young Lord was stunned, fearing lest he be to blame for the ravage of Miidera. With no one to tell him exactly how it had happened, he and Keiju could only grieve and sob all the more.

XVII. Just then an old man of eighty or so was brought to the prison as tribute from Awaji. His captor explained, ‘I nabbed him when he missed a step and fell off the edge of a rain cloud. Give him some name and use him as a servant. He is inferior to no one at flying through the sky.’

A day or two later the old man noticed the young Lord and Keiju weeping and sighing. ‘Excuse me, but [why] are your sleeves wet?’ he inquired.

‘We set out from our home on a trip but were spirited away to this goblin kingdom,’ the two answered together. ‘Every time we think of our parents’ grief and our master’s sorrow, our eyes flood with tears. Of course our sleeves are wet.’

‘If that is the case, please allow me to be of service,’ said the old man, greatly pleased. ‘I should like to escort you to the capital.’

Wringing out the young Lord’s sleeve, the old man collected teardrops that might have been mistaken for pearls. After he had rolled them around in his left hand for a time, the drops suddenly formed a sphere which grew to the size of a game ball. Breaking it in two, he held a half in each palm. He shook them gently, and gradually they grew larger and larger. They turned into a rushing flood inside the stone prison!

At that point the old man suddenly changed into a storm god. His thunder caused the earth to tremble, and his lightning flashed in the heavens. The brave goblins, trembling with fear, fled in every direction. A dragon god kicked open

vicinity, or else boko, child. Inji probably means ishi-uchi, a game in which players throw stones at each other. Sora-inji is unknown, but Ichiko speculates that it means throwing stones in the air without a fixed target.

Gozan refers to the five ranking temples of the Rinzai Zen sect. Sō no montodate means either the priests’ competition for political influence or in religious debates (Ichiko, Otogi Zōshi, p. 476).
the stone prison. The youth and the boy, and all the others, were placed upon a cloud and transported to the Shinzen’en⁷³ in the ruins of the old palace.

XVIII. The released prisoners each went his own way home from there. When the young Lord and Keiju arrived at the Hanazono residence, there was only charred ground where the proud mansion had stood and no one to answer their questions. Inquiring at a priest’s residence nearby, they were told that the monks of Miidera had attacked the Minister’s mansion and burned it to the ground because they suspected that he had condoned the abduction of the young Lord to Mt Hiei. 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 and inquire about the chief priest.

With Keiju leading the young Lord by the hand, they trudged along only to find that not a single temple building, not even the priests’ quarters, remained. Everything was in ashes. The grasses in the quiet gardens wept dewdrops; the pines on the lonely mountain moaned in the wind. Foundation stones were scorched and cracked, the moss singed, the plum which stood by the eaves seared, and there was no breeze to carry its [lost] fragrance. The young Lord believed that he alone was to blame for the grievous transformation. Surely he had offended the gods; surely his name was on everyone’s lips as the subject of gossip. How wretched he felt! Desolate as it was, he was loath to forsake the place which had been his home for several years. He spent that night at the shrine of Shinra Daimyōjin, gazing at the moon in the lake with tear-filled eyes.

XIX. They hoped that the chief priest might be at Ishiyama and went to look for him there. When they were told that he was not, Keiju suggested, ‘If that is the case, stay here in the main hall tonight as a pilgrim. I shall go up to Mt Hiei and find the Master.’

The young Lord had pondered deeply and was now determined simply to remove himself from this floating world. When there was no one to stop him, he would drown himself in some pool as he desired. He wept as he confessed his intentions in a letter. After giving it to the boy, who could not know that this was their final parting, the young Lord sadly stood and watched him go off into the distance.

The boy hurried up Mt Hiei with the letter. Speechless at the sight of him, the Master dissolved in tears. The boy brushed his own tears away and began to describe all that had happened, but the Master wanted to see the letter first. Opening it, he found this cryptic poem:

May the moon above the mountain rim
Illumine the depths of the shoal
When my body has sunk.⁷⁴

⁷³ 神泉苑, a garden in the southern part of the Imperial Palace grounds where prayers for rain were offered after Kūkai first did so there in 824.

⁷⁴ This poem is similar to one by Izumi Shikibu 荻野歌 in Shūishū 摘遺集 #1342.
XX. ‘Look at this!’ cried the Master, panicking. ‘How ominous! Tell me your news on the way. Come now, hurry!’ With Keiju leading the way, he left Sakamoto that instant, and they hastened toward Ishiyama. Passing Ōtsu, they overheard a large group of travelers talking together: ‘How pitiful! What sorrow could have caused the youth to throw himself into the river? How sorely his parents and master will mourn him.’

Full of apprehension, the Master and Keiju pressed the travelers for details. Stopping to explain, the travelers spoke with tears pouring from their eyes: ‘Just now, when we were crossing the bridge at Seta, a youth of sixteen or seventeen, wearing a plum-colored inner robe under his suikan, faced west, recited the nembutsu ten times, and then flung himself into the water. It was such a pathetic sight, we jumped in to try to save him, but he never resurfaced. There was nothing we could do: he was lost.’

XXI. There was no doubt that the travelers’ description of the youth’s age and dress fitted the young Lord. Although weak with shock and on the verge of collapse, the Master and Keiju hastened their palanquins to the foot of the bridge. There they found the narrow-corded gold brocade charm that the young Lord had always worn and his blue lazulite rosary hanging on a bridgepost. The Master and Keiju burned with such anguish that they would have drowned themselves in the same current that had taken the young Lord away. But the many fellow priests who had just arrived restrained them, and the Master decided that he would kill himself later, for he wanted one more glimpse of the youth’s face, even though it be lifeless. He climbed into a small fishing boat tied up close by and scanned the deep pools. His companions stripped [off their clothes] and scrutinized every crevice among the rocks and every shadow under the bank. When they could not find him, the Master cast his eyes toward heaven and then fell prostrate, lamenting bitterly.

Finally, having pursued their search as far as the Kugo rapids, they saw what appeared to be the deep red of fallen maple leaves clogging the river. Something had drifted down and lodged in the shadow of the rocks. Bringing the boat nearer, they spied the lifeless face that they sought. The youth’s long hair was tangled in the floating duckweed; the body weltered in the waves that broke over the rocks. Sobbing, they lifted him up. The Master held the young Lord’s head in his lap; Keiju hugged the youth’s legs to his breast.

‘How heart-rending a sight! Did he think we could endure such a tragedy? Bonten, Taishaku, Tenjin, Chigi! Accept our lives instead. Just let us see him stir once more.’ However loudly they might wail, a fallen blossom that has

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75 An important crossing of the River Seta about four or five kilometers below the Seta Bridge, mentioned above.
76 梵天, the Japanese name for Brahma.
77 帝釋, the Japanese name for Indra.
78 天神 (also called Amatsukami), the celestial gods.
79 地祇, the terrestrial gods, that is, Amaterasu and the other gods of the first five generations.
forsaken the branch cannot bloom a second time. The waning moon sinking in the west cannot again ascend to the zenith. Under the dripping robe, now a deeper shade, his breast had become as cold as snow. Although the arc of his ruffled eyebrows, the luster of his dishevelled hair, and his delicate features were all unchanged, his eyes, so seductive when he smiled, were tightly shut and his complexion was completely altered.

The Master and Keiju threw themselves down at his side and sobbed, heartbroken. In their sorrow, all the Master's colleagues and the lesser priests writhed on the moss and lamented unceasingly. Hoping he might by some wild chance revive, they pressed their breasts to his skin to warm him, but their prayers went unanswered. On the following day at nearby Toribeno\(^8\) his body was reduced to a wisp of smoke. The priests and attendants went home one by one when it had drifted away, but the Master and Keiju stayed on.

For three days they wept before the tall pile of ashes. They would have preferred to be buried under the moss with him, but the words of his death poem, 'May the moon above the mountain rim illumine the depths', revealed his wish that memorial services be held for him. In the end, the Master did not return to Mt Hiei. Donning robes of deep black and hanging [the box containing] the youth's ashes around his neck, he set out on pilgrimage. Later he built a hermitage near Mt Nishi in Iwakura, where he prayed for the young Lord's salvation in the afterlife. Keiju at last shaved his head and withdrew to the seclusion of Mt Kōya, never to leave the recesses of the mountain.

\(^8\) 鳥鶴野, the site of a crematory outside Kyoto in the foothills of Higashiyama.
XXII. Life seemed senseless to the thirty priests of Miidera who had instigated the sanmaya ordination platform scheme. Since it was not feasible to return to the temple to live, they all decided to abandon the mountain. They returned once to the charred ruins of the temple gate to recite the sutras in profound devotion. As a final leavetaking before setting out to practice religious austerities, they would all keep vigil until dawn and offer a last formal service to Shinra Daimyōjin.

When it had grown so late that dream was indistinguishable from reality, out of the vacant eastern sky came galloping horses, the rumbling of wagons, and the commotion of the arrival of a great many important guests. How wondrous! Timidly looking on, they saw prelates, doubtless of high rank,\(^{81}\) riding in shihō palanquins and surrounded by a large crowd of attendants. There were laymen in formal ceremonial court dress accompanied by retainers in helmets and armor. Attended on left and right by dozens of maids were women wearing jeweled combs in their hair and riding in elegant carriages.

The priests asked servants in pale peach-colored robes who came along behind: 'Who are these people who have passed by?' 'None other than Hie Sannō who abides in East Sakamoto has come,' the servants replied. The honored guests all alighted from their palanquins and entered a screened-off area. Shinra Daimyōjin adjusted his headress and with great dignity emerged from behind a curtain of gold brocade to greet them. The host and the guests drank the toast when they were duly seated. The feast began and Shinra smiled with pleasure as he enthusiastically took part in the amusement. They reveled all night, and when Sannō left at dawn, Shinra Daimyōjin accompanied him beyond the temple gates and watched until he was out of sight.

XXIII. When Shinra Daimyōjin had ascended the stairs and was about to enter his shrine, one of the priests keeping vigil knelt before the god and spoke through his tears.

'It was in compliance with previous imperial sanctions and to help our temple prosper that we constructed the sanmaya ordination platform. We don't believe it was at all improper of us. Yet Mt Hiei, arbitrarily ignoring the frequent imperial injunctions, perpetrated many evil deeds and now has succeeded in ravaging our temple. I had imagined the gods and the Buddhas would be sorely vexed at this, and yet you have held a banquet, arranged entertainment, and made merry with Hie Sannō, the patron god of our enemy, Mt Hiei. What is your divine motive? We cannot imagine what it might be.'

'Although it seems at first that there is reason for you to bear malice, that is a narrow and selfish attitude,' said Shinra Daimyōjin, summoning all the priests keeping vigil. 'When the gods and the Buddhas manifest their good will toward

\(^{81}\) Hōmu no daisōjō 法務ノ大僧正, high-ranking priests holding administrative posts.
mankind,\textsuperscript{82} they may judge an act as virtuous and reward it with prosperity, but that is not their real intention. When they denounce an act and mete out punishment, that is the height of compassion. Their only purpose is to forge out of either good or evil deeds a link between men and Buddhism and finally to guide them to supreme enlightenment.

'It is hardly likely that you would know what pleases me. With the destruction of the temple and the priests’ quarters there is opportunity now for merit to be earned through contributions toward its reconstruction. With the loss of the sutras and sāstras, the commentaries and sacred teachings, a fate of future enlightenment may be secured by recopying them. One who has earned Buddhahood in this world by the merit of his religious practices surely will not remain caught in the cycle of samsāra. I am delighted by Keikai’s religious awakening and the good influence that he has had on others. Although products of sorrow, these things are causes for joy. Sannō came here because he was also glad. Keikai’s enlightenment was accomplished by the Ishiyama Kannon manifesting herself as a youth. For such great compassion, we are sincerely grateful.'

Realizing that Shinra Daimyōjin had withdrawn behind a curtain, the thirty priests keeping vigil awakened, and all described the same dream.

XXIV. The young Lord’s relinquishing his life had been the work of Kannon and the destruction of the temple an expedient to lead men to salvation. With this lesson etched deeply in their hearts, the thirty priests all experienced a religious awakening and decided to undertake the practice of Buddhist austerities. They went to vist Keikai, who was now called the holy man Sensai, at his retreat in Iwakura. In a thatched hut, eighteen-feet square, half concealed by clouds, he wore a robe as thin as withered lotus leaves even after the frosts of late autumn and ate only fruit blown down by the morning breezes. The wind rustled through the pines, and streams babbled down the mountain slopes. He had wakened from the dreams of the floating world, but still the moon [reflected] in his sleeves was deluged with his tears whenever someone spoke of the past.

The light of the moon we viewed together,  
Is it guiding him  
Westward, tonight?

This poem written on the wall of the room won high approval from the emperor and was chosen for inclusion in the section of Buddhist poems in the Shinkokinshū.\textsuperscript{83} He had meant to retire from the world, but ‘Moral force never dwells in solitude; it will always bring neighbors.’\textsuperscript{84} Since many priestly visitors gathered

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{82} Rishō hōhen o taruru hi 利生方隅ヲ恒ラル日. Rishō is to benefit mankind, while hōhen is a means or an expedient; thus, ‘when the gods reveal ways for mankind to benefit religiously’.

\textsuperscript{83} Shinkokinshū #1978: Mukashi mishi/tsuki no hikari o|shirube nite|koyoi ya kimi ga|mishi e yukuran.

\end{footnotesize}
from various places, he resolved to build a temple nearer the capital and to try to provide religious succor more widely. He undertook the performance of rituals at Ungoji on Higashiyama. 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. From near and far, treading close on each others' heels, the high and low flocked here to press their palms together in worship.

With tears in my eyes, I have marveled along with my listeners at this tale exemplifying how the seeds of Buddhahood spring from fate. Who could hear it without being moved to tears?