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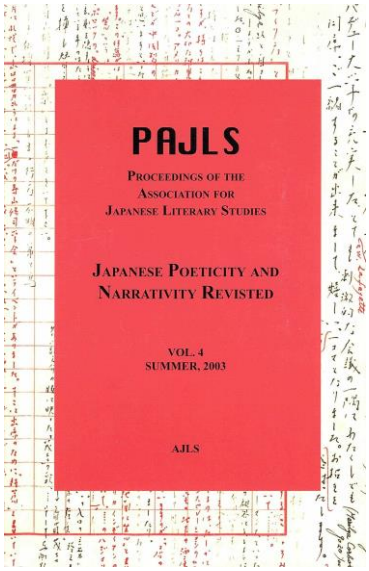

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DOWN THE PRIMROSE PATH: ARIWARA NO NARIHIRA AS LOVE GOD IN MEDIEVAL JAPANESE POETIC COMMENTARIES AND NOH THEATER

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Towards the end of the Kamakura period, a relatively obscure poet-priest, Fujiwara no Tameaki (ca. 1230s–after 1295), transformed the pedagogy of waka poetry by incorporating the esoteric Buddhist ordination and transmission system of initiation (Shingon *kanjō*). At these poetry initiation ceremonies, a "waka mandala" was displayed along with portraits of Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin (the patron deity of waka poetry) and the poets Kakinomoto no Hitomaro and Ariwara no Narihira (considered the founders of the Way of Poetry). Incense was burnt, elaborate gifts of money and clothing were presented, and after appropriate poetic dharani or mantras were recited, commentaries containing esoteric poetic "secrets" were transmitted to the initiate along with genealogical documents purportedly authenticating an unbroken line of transmission.

Tameaki was the son of Fujiwara no Tameie (1198–1275) and grandson of Fujiwara no Teika (1162–1241). Teika was probably the most influential medieval Japanese poet and the founder of the Mikohidari poetry house, whose descendants dominated the medieval and Edo period tradition of waka poetry. At a relatively young age (perhaps late thirties) Tameaki took orders as a Shingon priest and he appears to have been an adept in the infamous Tachikawa sect, which advocated tantric sex as a means to enlightenment. I should note that Tachikawa was not known by that name at the time, and did not become heretical until at least a hundred years later. It was just one of a number of marginal movements within esoteric Buddhism and syncretic Shinto, but its influence was quite widespread. At any rate, Tameaki's esoteric commentaries managed to transform canonical texts such as *Ise monogatari* (Tales of Ise) and the first imperial poetry anthology *Kokinwakashū* into complex tantric allegories.

These commentaries have only recently become the focus of sustained scholarly attention (as opposed to vehement repudiation). The lack of scholarly interest is not surprising: the content of the commentaries is difficult to take seriously and scholars tend to want to take the objects of their study seriously. When these commentaries perform philological analyses on obscure words and phrases, they do so

by means of etymological paronomasia and numerological homologizing no longer accepted as interpretive modes. They show almost no interest in pragmatic issues (except to describe certain secret rituals that must be performed for court ceremonials involving poetry) or aesthetics. And they invoke a tantric form of religiosity that has been suppressed for more than five hundred years. In other words, they instantiate religious and literary modes of interpretation completely different from our own, and are therefore difficult to assimilate into our contemporary critical practices. But if you go back and look at other texts from the period, particularly syncretic Shingon and Tendai oral transmissions, you see etymological paronomasia everywhere. It makes no sense to ignore such an important medieval phenomena simply because it does not fit our notions of what proper interpretation should be.

One of the aims of this paper is therefore to demonstrate what it means to treat the Kamakura commentaries seriously, on their own terms, which appears to have been the way that Muromachi period playwrights such as Komparu Zenchiku treated them. As a way into this topic, I will focus only on the commentaries on *Ise monogatari* and particularly on their representation of the poet Ariwara no Narihira (825-880) and how that representation was supplemented to reinforce the authority of the commentaries.

Let us begin with a short discussion of *Ise monogatari*. It is a collection of 125 short prose episodes (*dan* 段, literally "steps"). Each of these episodes provides a narrative context for one or more poems. There is no narrative connection between episodes, but a majority of them begin with the phrase "In the past, there was a man" (*mukashi otoko*). The repeated figure of this unnamed man, who participates in amorous poetic exchanges with a wide variety of women, led readers to try to connect the dots, so to speak, between the episodes, and quite early on in the history of the reception of the text, the "Man of Old" was identified as the poet Ariwara no Narihira, and the text as a whole was understood as a biography or autobiography of Narihira.[1]

[1] The identification is actually not unfounded: the collection contains a disproportionate number of poems attributed elsewhere to Narihira or to people with whom Narihira is known to have associated. Thirty-four of the poems composed by the Man of Old are attributed to Narihira in the *Kokinshū* and *Gosenshū* and a number of the stories in *Ise monogatari* closely parallel *Kokinshū* foretexts to his poems. In addition, the court offices held by the Man of Old correspond to those held by Narihira: director of the Stables of the Right and middle captain of the Imperial Guards of the Right.

Fujiwara no Tameaki appears to have taken this idea and run with it, arguing that Ariwara no Narihira was much more than just the poet of eroticism *par excellence*. According to Tameaki, Narihira was an avatar who became mortal and wrote *Ise monogatari* as an expedient means, a *hōben*, to benefit and enlighten all living beings. For this purpose he had been incarnated numerous times throughout Japanese history, most notably as Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (?– d. ca. 708–715), the most important poet of the *Man'yōshū* period. He was identified as an incarnation of both native and Buddhist deities, including Izanami and Izanagi as the primordial kami of Yin and Yang, Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin as the guardian deity of waka poetry, and ultimately of Dainichi Nyorai, the central buddha of Shingon. And as their manifestation he made love with numerous women, not just for the fun of it, but in order to bring them enlightenment through sex.

The idea that Narihira slept with women to bring them to enlightenment was first voiced in texts associated with Tameaki such as the preface to the Sanjōnishi lineage of *Waka chikenshū*, in which Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin appears to the eleventh century poet Minamoto no Tsunenobu (1016-1097), and explains the secrets of *Ise monogatari*:

> Narihira is identified as two bodhisattvas: the Bodhisattva of Song and Dance in Paradise and the Horse-Headed Kannon. Seeing the plight of humanity...he was born as a human into this world...and eventually brought consolation to 3733 suffering women. He recorded his activities in *Ise monogatari* in order to explain to later generations the [esoteric] meaning of eroticism (*irogonomi*).[2]

At first Tsunenobu strongly objects:

> Every scripture says that to approach a female is the ultimate karmic act; thus all buddhas warn about this in particular, calling it either, "fixing the mind on boundless kalpas" or "one cause leading to five hundred births." What kind of bodhisattva is it who tries to encourage escape from suffering by urging people to take the path of which others have made such dire warning? This is strange indeed.[3]

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[2] Kunaichō Shoryōbu shozō den Tameuji hitsu *Waka chikenshū*, in Katagiri, *Ise monogatari no kenkyū (shiryōhen)*, p. 108. Hereafter Kunaichō *Waka chikenshū*.

[3] Ibid., pp. 108–109. Translation (modified) from Bowring, "The *Ise*

However, Tsunenobu is eventually won over by the Tachikawa argument that in this age of the degenerate Dharma (*mappō*), since humanity has become bored with good intentions and finds it difficult to follow the Buddhist precepts, the buddhas have devised a way known as the "Dharma of the Harmonious Union between the Two Fluids of Womb and Egg." This path of enlightened sex was devised as an expedient means by Narihira as bodhisattva. It is an adaptation to human propensities that allows those people who would otherwise wander in endless darkness to be guided to a state of Buddhahood in this very existence.

Now this is a pretty interesting view of Narihira, if you ask me. The obvious first question is, why did Tameaki chose Narihira for this all-important tantric task?

According to Narihira's obituary in *Sandai jitsu roku* (The true history of three reigns), he was an elegant, handsome man, much given to amorous affairs, and an excellent poet. Narihira's poetic reputation was given an additional boost when Ki no Tsurayuki singled out him and five other poets for special attention in the preface to the *Kokinshū* and included thirty of his poems in the anthology itself. So the Narihira persona of a brilliant poet, irresistibly attractive to women, was already well on the way to being established by the start of the tenth century. If you add to this the adventures ascribed to Narihira as the Man of Old in *Ise monogatari*, we find this "Narihira" persona caught up in a very complex web of romantic attachments indeed.

It is a pretty big step, however, from Narihira as amorous gallant and brilliant poet to incarnation of tantric deity. How and why did this transformation take place? In my book, *Allegories of Desire*, I use three main angles to look at the development of the waka initiation ceremony, the content of the commentaries transmitted in that ceremony, and the allegorical interpretive method the commentaries employed.[4] The first angle is textual: what it was about *Ise monogatari* and the imperial anthology *Kokinshū* that incited allegorical interpretation in a way that other important Heian period texts, such as *Genji monogatari* did not. Second, contextual: the political, economic, and religious context for their development. Third, I consider what might be termed "localized contingencies": that is, the historical circumstances surrounding the individuals involved in the development of the initiation system, to

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monogatari," p. 36.

[4] Klein, Allegories of Desire: Esoteric Literary Commentaries of Medieval Japan (Harvard University Press, 2003).

whatever extent we can determine them. Here I will concentrate on just a few of the contextual and local contingencies behind the transformation of Narihira from amorous poet to bodhisattva, beginning with the religious context.

One of the central concerns of medieval poets was the Buddhist argument that the literary arts were nothing but "wild words and ornate phrases" (*kyōgen kigo* 狂言綺語), sins of language that would lead the unwary poet to reincarnation in one of the lower, more hellish, of the Six Realms. As William LaFleur has argued at length in the *Karma of Words*, poets and scholars of this period felt hard-pressed to justify their frivolous pursuit of the literary arts in terms of the religious values of the age.[5] And the difficulties for good medieval Buddhists who wanted to write poetry paralleled the difficulties that had developed slightly earlier for good Buddhists who wanted to continue worshiping the native Japanese deities. Allegoresis, that is allegorical interpretation, often appears when rival worldviews come into conflict, diplomatically syncretizing rather than synthesizing so that diverse origins and intellectual styles are preserved.[6] And in fact, allegoresis proved very useful in the Japanese context. First it proved useful for syncretizing kami and Buddhist deities; second, for syncretizing the paths of poetry and of Buddhist enlightenment. Allegoresis used puns and repetition to create identifications of the Original Ground of buddhas and bodhisattvas with kami as their Manifest Traces; in turn it was used to identify famous poets, scholars, and important historical figures with kami and bodhisattvas.

It might be useful to stop here to give two examples of the kind of allegorical interpretation commonly used in medieval syncreticism and in commentaries influenced by Tameaki. Toward the end of the Heian period and throughout the Kamakura a number of documents offering rationales for syncretic identifications between kami and Buddhist deities and/or principles were composed on Mt. Hiei, the center of Tendai esoteric Buddhism. The result was a single, but complex, multi-layered entity to which the name Sannō (山王) was given. The following example of syncretic identification, which is typical in its use of allegoresis, is taken from a medieval biography of the Tendai priest Gyōen (?-1047).

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[5] See particularly LaFleur's discussion of these issues in his first chapter, "'Floating Phrases and Fictive Utterances': The Rise and Fall of Symbols," *Karma of Words*, pp. 1–25. H. E. Plutschow also addresses the problem of *kyōgen kigo* in, "Is Poetry a Sin? *Honjisuijaku* and Buddhism versus Poetry."

[6] For a discussion of allegory as synthesizing, see Fletcher, "Allegory in Literary History," pp. 43–44.

According to the biographer, the Sannō deity appeared to Gyōen and told him the following:

> Do you know why I am called Sannō? I signify that three truths are one. The three [vertical] strokes of *san* 山 denote emptiness [*kū* 究], temporariness [*ke* 假], and the mean [*chū* 中]. The underlying stroke signifies oneness. *Oo* 王 consists of three [horizontal] strokes standing for the three truths while the center symbolizes oneness. So the two characters have three strokes and one common stroke. That is why I am called Sannō Myōjin. This means that all the underlying truths are in one mind and three thousand minds in one mind. Therefore I protect my Tendai and give peace to the country. There is no name without body and body without name. There is no Dharma without name and there is no name without Dharma. Body is Dharma--Dharma is name. This is called one vehicle. This is the meaning of my name.[7]

This example of etymological allegoresis involves paronomasia: breaking down the character into its component parts and then rearranging those parts to reveal a hidden meaning. The graphs for Sannō are analyzed to reveal a hidden correspondence with the fundamental three-part Tendai doctrine of emptiness (all dharma are empty), temporariness (they appear to have provisional existence), and the middle path which unites the other two. These three ways of viewing existence stand in a relation of conditional interdependence, a relation summed up in the phrase, *sandai ichijitsu* (三諦一実 three relative truths, one absolute truth). The two graphs in the name "Sannō" are shown to be made up of three parallel strokes combined with a third unifying stroke, thus graphically symbolizing this relation.

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[7] Shiban, *Honchō kōsōden*, p. 680. Translation from Matsunaga, *The Buddhist Philosophy of Assimilation*, pp. 190–91. Gyōen's biography is found in a collection compiled in the early Edo period from a number of medieval sources, so it is difficult to date. It unlikely, however, that this kind of etymological analysis would have been produced during Gyōen's lifetime. The similarity of content with a text written by the Tendai monk Shinga (1329–?) makes it more probable that the story was produced sometime in the Kamakura period. For Shinga's version of this analysis see Kojima and Takayoshi, "Tendai kuden hōmon no kyōdō kenkyū," p. 202; in English see Allan G. Grapard, "Linguistic Cubism: A Singularity of Pluralism in the Sannō Cult," p. 226.

The last part of the passage is particularly noteworthy, for it illustrates the philosophical basis for this kind of word play having any persuasive authority. The body, the dharma which go to make up that body, and the name attached to the body are indivisibly related; thus correct analysis of a name provides insight into the essence of what is named, and by extension, into the nature of reality. The Sanjōnishi lineage *Waka chikenshū*'s discussion of the meaning of the title *Ise monogatari* also makes clear the commentary's assumption that names are not simply arbitrary: "The myriad things arise from their names, in accordance with the principle that the name is the result of the essential nature of the graph."[8] For the esoteric literary commentaries in particular, this principle is fundamental; their approach to textual analysis depends on a non-arbitrary relationship between words and both Absolute and phenomenal reality.

For example, take the phrase "mukashi otoko" which, as I noted above, opens a number of the episodes in *Ise monogatari*. In order to reveal the true, esoteric meaning of the phrase the Reizei school commentary *Ise monogatarishō* (Selected comments on *Ise monogatari)* analyzes the graph for *mukashi* 昔: "When [the primordial deities] Izanagi and Izanami had sex [thereby creating the country of Japan], one female and three males were born in twenty-one days. As this was the origin of Yin and Yang, when Narihira wrote of eroticism (*irogonomi* 色好み) he used the word *mukashi* 昔 because that graph is written with the elements for "twenty-one days"廿一日.[9]

Here, the repetitive use of the phrase "*mukashi otoko*" in *Ise monogatari* is understood to be a clue left deliberately by Narihira. When properly analyzed this clue reveals that *Ise monogatari*, although superficially appearing to be about Narihira's frivolous love affairs, is actually grounded in something much more profound: the origin of Japan through the sexual act of Izanagi and Izanami, an act which serves as a model for enlightened tantric sex. By employing the allegorical methodology of medieval syncretism commentators like Tameaki were able to provide what their audience wanted: a solution to the problem of "wild words and ornate phrases" that would allow poets to keep producing poetry in good conscience.

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[8] Kunaichō *Waka chikenshū*, in Katagiri, Ise monogatari no kenkyū (shiryōhen), p. 117.

[9] Kunaichō Shoryōbu shōzō Reizeike-ryū *Ise monogatarishō*, in Katagiri, *Ise monogatari no kenkyū* (*shiryōhen*), p. 193. Hereafter, Reizeike-ryū *Ise monogatarishō*.

At least one serious problem remained, however. The medieval literary establishment tended to value only commentaries that had the proper family pedigree. Thus Tameaki faced the question of how to legitimate commentaries that he had manufactured himself. As we shall see, he devised a number of ingenious ways to provide his commentaries with the full authority of the Mikohidari poetry house.

Although Tameaki was born into the Mikohidari house as Fujiwara Tameie's son, and Fujiwara Teika's grandson, he was by no means a favored son. After his father Tameie died, Tameaki could argue that these esoteric commentaries had been transmitted only to him because he was a Shingon priest, and it is clear that he did in fact transmit them to his half brother Reizei Tamesuke and his nephews Kyōgoku Tamekane and Nijō Tameyo. But for the system to work, in order for Tameaki's allegorical readings to be justified, Tameaki had to prove that *Ise monogatari* and the *Kokinshū* were originally written as religious allegories.

Tameaki appears to have come up with an influential solution to this particular problem by means of an ingenious reading of episode 117 in *Ise monogatari*. The fact that this reading appears again and again not only in Tameaki-affiliated texts, but in nearly every other Kamakura period secret commentary, from the Reizei school *Ise monogatarishō* to the Nijō school *Ise monogatari zuinō*, demonstrates its usefulness as substantiating proof for the allegorical interpretations that formed the basis of the waka initiation system. And our friend Narihira plays a central role in the etiology that Tameaki developed.

So first let us take a look at episode 117. In this episode an anonymous emperor visits Sumiyoshi Shrine, and exchanges poems with Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin.

Once in the past an emperor journeyed to Sumiyoshi.

ware mite mo/ hisashiku narinu/ Sumiyoshi no
kishi no himematsu/ ikuyo henuran

It's been ages since I first saw the princess pine along the shore at Sumiyoshi;
how many reigns must it have seen go by?[10]

The [Sumiyoshi] Kami manifested itself and replied:

[10] *Kokinshū* 905, anonymous.

mutsumashii to/ kimi wa shiranami/ mizugaki no
hisashiki yo yori/ iwaisometeki

Don't you know of our intimate relation? This wave-washed shrine fence
has protected you since time immemorial.[11]

A variant text of *Ise* indicates that Narihira was present on this occasion, and also exchanged poems with the Daimyōjin who appears in the form of a venerable old man, or *okina*:

Hearing this, Narihira, who was in attendance, composed the following:

Sumiyoshi no/ kishi no himematsu/ hito naraba
ikuyo ka heshi to/ towamashi mono o

Princess Pine on the shore of Sumiyoshi, if you were only human,
I would ask how many reigns you have seen.[12]

When he recited this, a badly dressed old man (*okina*) appeared and replied:

koromo dani/ futatsu ariseba/ Akahada no
yama ni hitotsu wa/ kasamashi mono o

If only I had two robes,
I'd lend one to Stark Naked Mountain (Akahada no yama).[13]

Now, according to a variety of Tameaki-affiliated commentaries (*Gyokuden jinpi no maki*, *Kokinwakashūjo kikigaki*, and *Shinsen teisetsu shū*, as well as Tameaki-influenced texts such as *Ise monogatari zuinō*

[11] *Shin Kokinshū* 1857, with the following foretext: "According to *Ise monogatari*, during an imperial visit to the Sumiyoshi Shrine, the Kami manifested itself and transmitted this."
[12] *Kokinshū* 906. It seems probable that this section was added because an unknown editor wanted to link *Kokinshū* 905 and 906 in one episode.
[13] Both the Koshikibu Naishi variant and Tameuji variant include this material. For an exhaustive analysis of the variants of this episode, see Kobayashi, "Sumiyoshi no okina no monogatari," p. 3.

and the Reizei school *Ise monogatarishō*) Narihira was not only in attendance at the shrine, but it was he (not the Emperor) who recited the initial poem and so when the Sumiyoshi deity appeared and said, "Don't you know of our intimate relation?" he was actually revealing that Narihira was his incarnation:

> On the twenty-eighth day of the first month of Ten'an 1 (857), Emperor Montoku went on a pilgrimage to Sumiyoshi Shrine with Narihira in attendance. At that time a beneficent breeze purified Narihira and he was possessed by the kami. Everyone watched in amazement, staring at the kami's altar. Narihira bowed low before the altar and recited the following poem:
>
> > It's been ages since I first saw the princess pine along the shore at Sumiyoshi;
> > how many reigns must it have seen go by?
>
> At that moment the earth shook and the wind rustled through the pines. Next, when Narihira approached the jeweled altar, pushed it open, and looked inside, a young child dressed in a red robe appeared and replied:
>
> > Don't you know of our intimate relation? This wave-washed shrine fence has protected you since time immemorial.
>
> The meaning of this poem is: "you are me: why have you forgotten your Original Ground [*honji*]? In the shadow of this pine I have spent years as a Manifest Trace (*suijaku*). During that time how much have I benefited living beings? To benefit and save the multitude of living beings I was provisionally born in your ordinary [human] body.[14]

The relationship between Narihira and Sumiyoshi which is implied here is made quite explicit at a number of points later on in *Gyokuden jinpi no maki*: for example, "the Myōjin and Narihira are not two, but identical in nature (*funi dōtai* 不二同体)."[15] It was on this occasion as well that the

[14] Gyokuden jinpi no maki, in Katagiri, Chūsei Kokinshū chūshakusho kaidai, vol. 5, p. 545.
[15] Ibid., p. 538. This identification, which occurs is the "Naidō ron" section, takes place in the context of an explication of the poem from *Ise monogatari* episode 106 (*Kokinshū* 294, Narihira). *Gyokuden jinpi no maki* claims that the poem was

Sumiyoshi deity revealed the most profound secrets of poetry to Narihira: the *Akone no ura kuden* (The oral transmission of Akone Bay) and the *Gyokuden* (Jeweled transmission). This is important, because it was assumed that the commentaries transmitted in the secret initiation ceremony were based on these two texts.

According to the commentary, Narihira kept the *Akone no ura kuden* and transmitted it to his son Shigeharu. The implication is that Narihira used it as the basis for writing *Ise monogatari*, then transmitted it to his son so that later generations of his family would be able to correctly interpret the text's hidden esoteric meaning. A transmission lineage exists, undoubtedly fabricated by Tameaki, that indicates *Akone no ura kuden* was transmitted via a series of relatively unknown descendants of Narihira, until at some point it came into the possession of Fujiwara no Teika's father and thus became a treasured secret of the Mikohidari school.[16]

The *Gyokuden*, on the other hand was offered by Narihira to the Ise Shrine for safekeeping:

> It was not heard of for five imperial reigns. The five reigns were those of Seiwa, Yōzei, Kōkō, Uda, and Daigo. During the Engi era (901–923), Middle Counselor Kanetaka was sent as an imperial messenger to the Ise Grand Shrine. In a dream Kanetaka saw something wrapped up come from the shrine. When he woke up and looked around, he found [a scroll] wrapped in brocade. He took this and presented it to Emperor Daigo. This was *Gyokuden*.[17]

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actually composed by Tatsuta Daimyōjin, but since Tatsuta Daimyōjin and Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin are the same deity, and Narihira is an avatar (*kegen* 化現) of Sumiyoshi, the poem was attributed to Narihira. The identification of Narihira with Sumiyoshi is also essential to two other *Gyokuden jinpi no maki* poem explications: "Tsuki ya aranu" (*Ise monogatari* episode 4), p. 539; and "Mizu mo arazu" (*Ise monogatari* episode 99), p. 541.

[16] See "Ise monogatari shishi sōshō kechimyakufu," in Ishigami, "*Kingyoku sōgi*," pt. II, pp. 45–46.

[17] I have used the *Kokinwakashūjo kikigaki* version of the story here because it is more condensed and easier to follow than the version in *Gyokuden jinpi no maki*. The version in the Reizei school *Ise monogatarishō* is substantially the same; however, *Shinsen teisetsu shū* differs somewhat in that it seems to indicate that both texts were transmitted to the Ise Shrine. *Kokinwakashūjo kikigaki: Sanryūshō*, in Katagiri, *Chūsei Kokinshū chūshakusho kadai*, vol. 2, pp. 229–30. Hereafter, *Kokinwakashūjo kikigaki*.

When the *Gyokuden* was presented to Emperor Daigo in Engi 3 (903), the emperor was so impressed with the secrets on waka poetry contained in it that he immediately ordered the compilation of the first imperial anthology, the *Kokinshū*:

> When the emperor saw this text, he understood the deep meaning of waka. From this time he began to revere this path, and asked that the *Kokinshū* be compiled. Thus Narihira's "ware mite mo" poem is the origin of the imperial anthologies of the eight reigns.[18]

Again, the implication is that *Gyokuden* was the secret source of the *Kokinshū* and so if you have access to its secrets you will be able to understand the true tantric meaning of the *Kokinshū* and waka poetry in general.

For both of these commentaries, then, Narihira plays a pivotal role. He is understood to have written *Ise monogatari* using an oracular revelation from Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin. He is also understood to be ultimately responsible for the *Kokinshū*, since it again was the oracular revelation made to him that inspired its compilation. Two questions remain: First, how was this identification of Narihira with the Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin justified? And second, given the lack of any historical record of Narihira having an esoteric religious affiliation, how did the commentaries explain Narihira's profound grasp of Shingon Buddhism?

In some of the later episodes of *Ise monogatari*, the "Man of Old" is identified as *okina* or *katai okina* (かたゐ翁 humble old man).[19] In *Ise monogatari*, this originally probably meant little more than that the character had become old. We have seen, however, that in some versions of episode 117 Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin manifests himself as an *okina*. The first impulse towards identifying Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin and Narihira as *okina* would have been those readers of *Tales of Ise* who believed in the

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[18] Ibid., p. 230.

[19] The designation of the Man of Old as *okina* occurs in episodes 76, 77, 79, 81, 83, and 97 (episode 114, which also mentions an old man, was generally understood to refer to Ariwara no Yukihira.) In a number of these episodes the character is further identified with Narihira by his position: officer in the Imperial Guards (76), middle captain (97), or director of the Right Horse Bureau (77, 83). Itō Masayoshi notes that there is a version of *Ise monogatari* (*Jingū Bunko-bon*) whose episode 117 includes the phrase *okina no nariayashiki* (the supernatural splendor of *okina*). However, this probably indicates a retroactive identification of Sumiyoshi-Narihira-*okina* because of the influence of the Kamakura commentaries. Itō,"Yōkyoku *Takasago* zakkō," p. 118.

principle of correspondence, that repetition is meaningful, and therefore took any repetition of a generic title or descriptive phrase as a sign that two seemingly separate figures should be identified as one. We have already seen an example of this with the widespread belief that there must be a single historical figure behind the repeated phrase "mukashi otoko."

Tameaki's identification of Narihira with *okina* would have been encouraged by a number of other interrelated factors as well. The first was the medieval rise of Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin as the guardian deity of waka poetry. The choice of Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin as the source of oracular revelation in Tameaki's commentaries was probably not unrelated to Tameaki having been good friends with the head administrator of Sumiyoshi Shrine, Tsumori Kunisuke (1242–99). Kunisuke was married to the granddaughter of Fujiwara no Ietaka, and may well have been involved in writing the Ietaka school version of *Waka chiken shū*, the first commentary to attribute its insights to oracular revelation from Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin.

Another factor was the prevalence of *honji suijaku* thinking in the late Kamakura period. The identification of Narihira as a manifestation of Sumiyoshi makes a great deal of sense since it redoubles the poetic authority of the text. Not only is the sacred authority of Sumiyoshi brought into play, but if Narihira is none other than Sumiyoshi, the reader is getting the "facts" straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak--who would know better than Narihira himself the secrets hidden in *Ise monogatari*?

The last issue is the question of Narihira's esoteric education. The amount of Shingon Tachikawa content in the commentaries made it vital to give some explanation for how Narihira, who according to the usual historical record had little or no formal religious training, was capable of even understanding that esoteric content, much less transmitting it. The obvious answer was to claim that Narihira had studied at a temple at some point in his youth. Given the importance of transmission lineages in legitimating the commentaries, it makes sense that the temple that Narihira would be associated with would be Tō-ji, the head temple of the Shingon school, and the priest he studied with would be Shinga (783–879), the younger brother of the founder of Shingon in Japan, Kūkai (Kōbō Daishi, 774–835). Shinga was one of Kūkai's foremost disciples. He eventually became the head of Tō-ji temple and the fourth Grand Archbishop (*daisōjō*) of the Shingon school, so he was a very prominent cleric indeed.

Shinga's name appears in Tameaki's *Gyokuden jinpi no maki* as part of an explanation of a poem from *dan* 124 in *Ise monogatari*:

> *omou koto/ iwade tada ni ya/ yaminubeshi*
> *ware to hitoshiki/ hito nakereba*[20]
>
> Since there is no one with whom I can share my feelings,
> I'll just keep silent.

> Now as for Narihira's true intent and conception lying behind this poem, it signifies that he would not speak of how *Ise monogatari* was created, or of the Path of Intercourse between men and women. When Narihira was fourteen he became a disciple of Grand Archbishop Shinga, and from the age of sixteen to twenty-eight he studied the inner secrets of Shingon. In the various transmission lineages his Buddhist name is given as Kōken (Loving-Wisdom). Although he was a lay person, he took a Buddhist name. Thus "omou koto iwade" means "remain silent and do not reveal the deep secrets of Shingon." Because Narihira was especially steeped in passion, Shinga transmitted the true meaning of Shingon, keeping nothing back.[21]

In the Nijō school *Kokinwakashū kanjō kuden* this story is slightly altered and amplified by an anecdote indicating a miraculous birth:

> Three days before his birth, in a dream, the four types of lotus flowers were scattered in the four directions from his mother's womb. A light shown from out of the womb, and from within the light the two characters 喟 and 噉 appeared. Then two buddhas, Shakamuni and Tahō, sat and explained the principle of the non-arising seed syllable A…. After he was born, in accordance with his understanding of the superior vehicle of Shingon, he was called "Mandara-

[20] There is a slight discrepancy between the *Gyokuden jinpi no maki* version of this poem and the standard version found in episode 124 of *Ise monogatari*. The first three lines in *Ise monogatari* run: "omou koto/ iwade zo tada ni/ yaminubeki." The difference has little effect on the meaning.
[21] Gyokuden jinpi no maki, in Katagiri, Chūsei Kokinshū chūshakusho kaidai, vol. 5, p. 535.

> maru." When Narihira was eleven he went to study with Grand Archibishop Shinga, the head priest at Jōgan-ji and Kōbō Daishi's disciple.[22]

A rather non-intuitive reason for Shinga being an appropriate choice as teacher for Narihira is his strong political connections to Regent Fujiwara no Yoshifusa and his sister the Empress of the Fifth Ward, Junshi. I say non-intuitive because Michele Marra and Richard Okada have written at length about Narihira's convoluted relationship to the dominant Fujiwara court faction led by Yoshifusa, and both argue that *Ise monogatari* can be read as subversive of the dominance of the Fujiwara in Heian politics. In this reading, Narihira is a figure of resistance. The Kamakura commentaries, however, were written by members of the Fujiwara family, and not surprisingly they did their best to downplay any implicit subversion or criticism of their ancestors.[23] The Reizei school *Ise monogatarishō* and the Nijō school Bishamondō *Kokinshū chū* for example, explain that when Narihira was exiled to the eastern provinces (Azuma) for having an affair with the Emperor's consort, Kōshi, Yoshifusa took pity on him and let him stay in his villa in Higashiyama (the "eastern mountains" of Kyoto).[24] Yoshifusa was strangely supportive when you consider that Kōshi was Yoshifusa's niece and adopted daughter, and so Narihira was directly interfering with Fujiwara marriage politics. But given the attitude of the commentaries, Shinga's political and social connections to Yoshifusa would only have made him more attractive as a possible teacher of Narihira.

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[22] *Kokinwakashū kanjō kuden*, in Katagiri, *Chūsei Kokinshū chūshakusho kaidai,* vol. 5, p. 505. See also Arai, "*Kokinshū* kanjō hisho to Bukkyō kyōri," p. 7. The Reizei school *Ise monogatarishō* also includes a brief reference to Shinga: "From the time that he was eleven Narihira studied with Archbishop Shinga at Tō-ji. When he was sixteen, on the second day, third month of Shōwa 14 (847) he underwent the coming-of-age ceremony at Emperor Ninmyō's palace. His childhood name was 'Mandara.'" Reizeike-ryū *Ise monogatarishō*, in Katagiri, *Ise monogatari no kenkyū* (*shiryōhen*), p. 293.

[23] For discussions of Narihira as a figure of resistance to the Fujiwara see Okada, *Figures of Resistance*, pp. 131–156 and Marra, *The Aesthetics of Discontent*, pp. 35–53.

[24] Note the word play on Azuma (東) and Higashiyama (東山). See Bishamondō *Kokinshūchū*, in Yoshisawa, ed., vol. 4 of *Mikan kokubun kochū taisei*, p. 11; and Reizeike-ryū *Ise monogatarishō*, in Katagiri, *Ise monogatari no kenkyū (shiryōhen)*, pp. 305, 308. See also the Nijō school *Kokinwakashū kanjō kuden*, in Katagiri, *Chūsei Kokinshū chūshakusho kaidai*, vol. 5, pp. 512–13, which claims that it was Fujiwara no Kōshi's brother Mototsune who aided Narihira.

Another reason Shinga would have been chosen as Narihira's preceptor is that Tachikawa transmission documents nearly always name Shinga in their transmission lineages. For example, Arai Eizō quotes a Tachikawa text, *Juhō yōshin shō* (On the Circumspect Maintenance of Dharma), as follows:

> Among the numberless disciples of Kobō Daishi there were ten disciples of the *kanjō* level. These were all at a high level of wisdom, practice and virtue. Among these Jichie and Shinga were especially praised by Kobō Daishi. Therefore he left behind an order.....that when Jichie passed on, Shinga was to become the head of Shingon.[25]

Gyokuden jinpi no maki clearly implies that Shinga was involved in Tachikawa when it remarks, "Because Narihira was especially steeped in passion, Shinga transmitted the true meaning of Shingon, keeping nothing back." It seems that Narihira's natural aptitude for tantric sex was already obvious at the age of fourteen. Finally, the line "In the various transmission lineages his Buddhist name is given as Kōken (Loving-Wisdom)," makes it seem likely that at some point there existed a transmission document that contained the names of both Shinga and Kōken-Narihira. Such a transmission document would have given added authority to the commentary and initiation system within which it was transmitted.

By this time you are probably thinking, "this stuff is completely nuts. Why even bother with such obviously false fabrications?" Well aside from the sheer intrinsic interest that we all have in sex, it turns out they were highly influential. The secret initiation system that Tameaki pioneered became the dominant waka pedagogy for the next couple of hundred years. And although Tachikawa went out of fashion with the fall of Emperor Go-Daigo in the 1330s, a number of the supposed secrets moved out into popular culture where they infiltrated short prose tales, Buddhist tales, and Noh plays. If we do not understand these commentaries, we are going to miss the meaning that those texts had for their audience.

I will close here with a bit about how the representation of Narihira in Noh theater was influenced by these esoteric commentaries. By a process of gradual dissemination Tameaki's esoteric commentaries filtered into the popular culture of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,

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[25] Cited in Arai, "*Kokinshū* kanjō hisho," pp. 10–11.

forming the basis for numerous Noh plays and prose narratives. It turns out that virtually all Noh plays that are based on the *Kokinshū* actually take their plots from a single commentary by Tameaki: the *Kokinwakashū jo kikigaki* (Lecture Notes on the Preface to the *Kokinwakashū).* This commentary provided the secret stories behind metaphorical phrases from the *Kokinshū* Kana Preface, and if the evidence of the Noh plays is anything to go by, it was very widely disseminated. When these plays are read with the commentaries they were based on, whole new facets of meaning appear: it turns out that Noh is not simply about the beauty of the moon and the evanescence of cherry blossoms; it is also about sex and politics. The stories associated with these phrases underlie Noh plays as varied as *Takasago* ("growing old together with the twin pines of Takasago and Suminoe"), *Ominameshi* ("recalling the olden days of Man Mountain and mourning the brief blossoming of the maiden flower"), *Matsumushi* ("yearning for a friend at the sound of the pining cricket") and *Fujisan* ("comparing one's smoldering passion to Mt. Fuji's rising smoke").[26] Important allusions to the commentaries also appear in the Noh plays *Hakurakuten*, *Ashikari*, *Kinsatsu*, *Naniwa*, *Ukai*, *Asagao*, and *Sotoba Komachi* among others. Tameaki's commentaries also provided material for treatises by the Noh playwrights Zeami and Komparu Zenchiku, particularly Zeami's *Rikugi* (The six modes) and Zenchiku's *Meishukushū* (or *Myōshukushū*, Notes on the Radiant Deity).[27] And allusions to their material appeared in popular tales such as *Soga monogatari* (Tale of the Soga Brothers) and *Arokassen monogatari* (The battle of the crows and herons).[28]

Since this paper has been about *Ise monogatari*, I will focus on a few examples of how the image of Narihira as developed in the commentaries appears in Noh plays based on that text, particularly those written by the fifteenth-century playwright Konparu Zenchiku. Esoteric material and identifications from the commentaries provided the plot and poetic

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[26] Kokinwakashūjo kikigaki, in Katagiri, ed., Chūsei Kokinshū chūshakusho kaidai vol. 2, pp. 259–68.

[27] The influence of esoteric commentaries on the writing of Noh plays became a focus of interest within Japanese scholarship from the 1970s onward, particularly in the work of Itō Masayoshi and his students. For a start, see the following essays by Itō: "*Ise monogatari* to yōkyoku," pp. 359–68; "Kokinchū no sekai: sono han'ei toshite no chūsei bungaku to yōkyoku," pp. 3–9; "Yōkyoku to chūsei bungaku," pp. 34–44; and "Yōkyoku to *Ise monogatari* no hiden: *Izutsu* no baai o chūshin toshite," pp. 2-9.

[28] See Ishikawa, "Muromachi jidai monogatari ni okeru *Ise monogatari* no kyōju," pp. 169–222; also Bowring's discussion in "The *Ise monogatari*: A Short Cultural History," pp. 460–66.

content for the five major plays based on *Ise monogatari*: *Izutsu*, *Kakitsubata*, *Oshio*, *Ukon*, and *Unrin'in*. Of those, *Oshio* and *Kakitsubata* are thought to be by Zenchiku, and in *Oshio*, Narihira appears as an *okina* associated not only with Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin, but also with Kasuga Daimyōjin and Oshio Myōjin. Here I want to briefly (and very summarily) look at how this multiple identification appears to have taken shape, and the influence of the commentaries in that representation.

To begin with, one of the traditional origins of Noh was said to be a dance performed before a pine tree by the Kasuga shrine deity manifesting as *okina*. This "pine of manifestation" is said to be the same pine that is still today painted on the back of the Noh stage. All four of the major Noh troupes in the medieval period were tied to the Kasuga Shrine, and perhaps for that reason, the Kasuga deity came to be identified as the patron deity of dance and by extension all the performing arts.

Zenchiku took the identification of Kasuga and *okina* several steps further in his treatise *Meishukushū*, which he wrote on *shukushin*, a celestial deity of universal creativity manifesting as *okina*. In *Meishukushū* Zenchiku uses the rule of correspondence to argue that all manifestations of *okina* are ultimately one with this *shukushin* as the essence of creativity. Once again, repetition is meaningful. In other words, the *okina* that manifested at Kasuga is actually identical with the Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin *okina*, as well as with Narihira:

> As for the origins of the marvelous substance of *okina*, he first appeared when the heaven and earth were opened; from that time to the present he has protected the sovereigns, ordered the country, and saved the people. His Original Ground (*honji*) is Dainichi Nyorai....who unites the three Buddha bodies (the dharma body, enjoyment body and accommodative body); the provisional separation of these three bodies is revealed in *Okina shikisanban* (The Three Rituals of Okina). His Manifest Trace (*suijaku*) forms can be analyzed historically. First he is the Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin....[names a number of other deities]....The profound secret is that all these *honji suijaku* manifestations are one body/substance; not increasing, not decreasing, eternal, unperishing, the one body/substance of the marvelous kami....When we come to the age of human beings, the author of *Ise monogatari*, the Middle Captain Narihira, known as *katai okina* (the humble old man) was born into a poetic family; he

> guided foolish women and taught them the Way of Yin and Yang (*on'myō no michi*). He is named as one of the three okina (*mitari okina*), and one of the sages of poetry (歌仙 *kasen*) of the *Kokinshū*; revealed as an individual incarnation (分身 *bunshin*) of the one substance [of Dainichi Nyorai], he composed poems about birth, old age, illness and death.[29]

You can clearly see here that Zenchiku has been reading Tameaki: a number of important pieces are being fit together. The Kasuga *okina*'s Original Ground is Dainichi Nyorai, his Manifest Trace forms include Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin and his mortal incarnations include Narihira. One of Zenchiku's most consistent arguments in his treatises is that the Path of Waka and the Path of Noh are one, so it would make some sense that he would collapse the Sumiyoshi *okina* deity of poetry and the Kasuga *okina* deity of dance into one figure. Furthermore, here Zenchiku specifically identifies Narihira as *okina* because he is referred to by the epithet *katai okina* in *Ise monogatari*. This process of continuously expanding and exfoliating identifications based on correspondences, which Zenchiku uses to legitimate his argument, is the same method used in both syncretic Buddhist texts and in Tameaki's commentaries. In addition, Zenchiku's identification of the three *okina* in the *Kokinshū* is taken directly from Tameaki's commentary *Gyokuden jinpi no maki*, where we are told that, "the phrase [the three *okina*] is said to signify that the [Sumiyoshi] Daimyōjin, Hitomaro and Narihira are apparently three, but in reality one substance."[30]

The same process of identification developed in *Meishukushū* can be used to elucidate Zenchiku's plays. The play *Oshio* is based on episode 76 in *Ise monogatari*, in which the Empress from the Second Ward (Fujiwara no Kōshi) visits Oharano Shrine, a branch shrine of Kasuga, to pay her respects to the Oshio deity, the ancestral deity of the Fujiwara. Narihira, at this point an old man and referred to as *katai okina*, recites a poem for Kōshi that could be understood both as felicitous congratulations to the Oshio deity and the Fujiwara family, and as a nostalgic remembrance of Kōshi and Narihira's illicit love affair. In the play it is implied that the Narihira *okina* is actually an incarnation of Oshio Myōjin, and so ultimately, because Oshio is a branch shrine of

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[29] Zenchiku, Meishukushū in Itō, Komparu kodensho shūsei, p. 279–80.

[30] Katagiri, *Chūsei Kokinshū chūshakusho kaidai*, vol. 5, p. 528. The phrase "mitari okina" was used to refer to three poems from the *Kokinshū* whose anonymous authors lament their old age.

Kasuga, he is also an incarnation of Kasuga Daimyōjin, the deity of dance. In other words, Narihira is identified as an incarnation of the Fujiwara ancestral deity. Although this might perplex scholars who see the Narihira persona in *Ise monogatari* as a figure of resistance to the Fujiwara, it makes perfect sense if you understand the play's basis in the esoteric commentaries.

Another play by Zenchiku, *Kakitsubata* (The iris), skillfully uses various medieval commentaries' explanations of Ariwara no Narihira as Bodhisattva of Song and Dance, Kami of Yin and Yang, and Dainichi Nyorai, to generate multiple levels of meaning. These multiple levels are not, however, visible at the very start; they are only progressively revealed in a ever-widening exfoliation of associations via punning imagery that creates a complex set of parallels between, for example, the waki character as a wandering monk, the "real" Narihira, wandering in exile from the Heian capital, and the sacred Narihira, who as "the heavenly Bodhisattva of Song and Dance made mortal left Buddha's Capital of Tranquil Light to bring salvation and blessings to all."[31] To understand *Kakitsubata* you need to understand the interpretive method that underlies it, an interpretive method that was taken directly from Tameaki's commentaries. *Kakitsubata* makes a passionate claim for the potent power of words to affect phenomenal reality: Narihira, as the Bodhisattva of Song and Dance incarnate, "leaves inscribed in sheaves of poetry miraculous sermons on the Buddha's Dharma. When drenched in these dew-like blessings, even trees and grasses bear forth in fruitful enlightenment."[32] In this world poetry is not merely rhetoric, and dance is not simply movement: both have the power to bring us to enlightenment if they are correctly interpreted.

CONCLUSION

To contemporary scholars Tameaki's commentaries and their allegorical interpretive method so obviously appears to falsify the meaning of the text (to whatever extent we can understand that meaning in terms of its original historical context) that it is impossible to take it seriously. However, whereas contemporary scholars of medieval Europe treat Augustine or Aquinas's allegorical interpretations of the Hebrew Bible as sincere attempts to bring it into consonance with Christian scripture and theology, scholars of medieval Japanese literature have denigrated esoteric allegoresis of *Ise monogatari* and *Kokinshū* as

[31] *Kakitsubata*, in Itō, ed., *Yōkyokushū*, vol. 57, p. 263.
[32] Ibid., p. 262.

interpretation in bad faith. It is true that the motivation for these texts is somewhat suspect; one cannot help noticing that the performance of initiation ceremonies was quite lucrative. Perhaps, however, as more religious texts of Tachikawa Shingon and esoteric Shinto are uncovered and published, and their influence on the writing of the commentaries better understood, it will be possible to see Fujiwara no Tameaki and others involved in the production of these commentaries as participating in a religious movement that they truly believed in.

And even if Tameaki did write these commentaries in bad faith, that does not mean they should be ignored. As I have argued, they had an enormous influence on the subsequent development of waka pedagogy as well as on popular culture in the Muromachi period. Notwithstanding the suspect motivation of the medieval allegorists, these commentaries are replete with cultural assumptions whose interrogation is vital for a fuller understanding of the relations of medieval religion and literature. If we want to have any sense of the true heterogeneity of medieval Japan we need to pay closer attention to texts such as these that provoke a certain cognitive and critical discomfort. It is only in that way that we can begin to grasp the meaning that medieval literature, including Noh, had for its audience.

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