“Ascending Hibariyama: Textual, Physical, and Spiritual Journeys in *Chūjōhime* and *Chūjōhime no honji*”

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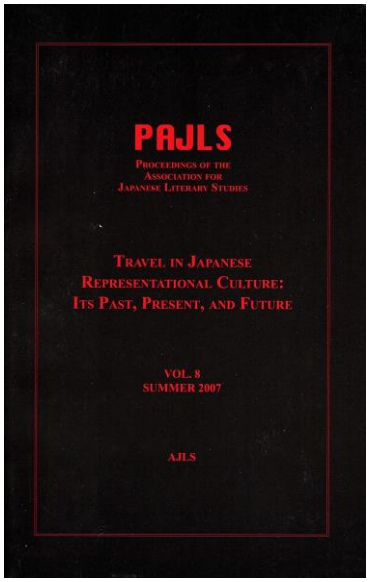

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ASCENDING HIBARIYAMA: TEXTUAL, PHYSICAL, AND SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS IN *CHŪJŌHIME* AND *CHŪJŌHIME NO HONJI*

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The story of the legendary eighth-century young noblewoman, Chūjōhime 中将姫, is one of the extensive body of late medieval short stories—collectively called *otogi zōshi* 御伽草子—which are preserved in written form from the Muromachi period (1392–1573) onward and are generally considered the earliest works of popular literature in Japan.[1]

Chūjōhime 中将姫 (16th Century) and *Chūjōhime no honji* 中将姫本地 (1651), two of the best-known *otogi zōshi* texts of Chūjōhime's legend, call our attention to occurrences of fantastic elements in this Buddhist tale of female salvation: Chūjōhime's miraculous birth through the mercy of the bodhisattva Kannon, and the miraculous creation of the *Taima mandala* 当麻曼荼羅 which is a cosmic diagram of Amida Buddha's Pure Land Western Paradise (*jōdo* 浄土). However, linking these two episodes is another miraculous event that has not received much attention in terms of its religious significance for the story—Chūjōhime's journey to Hibariyama 雲雀山—a fantastic textual, physical, and spiritual transcendent travel which played a key role in the popularization of Chūjōhime's legend and her cult from the fifteenth to seventeenth century.

This paper focuses on the significance of Chūjōhime's transcendent journey to Hibariyama and explores how it constitutes a crossing of boundaries between the religious and social constructions of gender in this Buddhist tale of female salvation, presenting Chūjōhime as religious outcast—not being able to attain enlightenment in her female body due to her sex—and as social outcast—transgressing the bounds of her role of filial daughter vis-à-vis her father. I suggest that Chūjōhime's forced

[1] In this paper, the term "late medieval" refers exclusively to the Muromachi (1392–1573) and Edo (1600–1868) periods. In 1730, the Osaka publisher and bookseller, Shibukawa Seiemon 渋川清右衛門, published a woodblock-printed edition of twenty-three short stories – most of which were illustrated – under the title *Goshūgen otogi bunko* 御祝言御伽文庫 *(The Wedding Companion Library)*, which over time became known as *otogi zōshi*. In the years after 1867, a large corpus of other Muromachi short stories were discovered and published under the title *otogi zōshi*, which today comprise five hundred short prose fictional narratives dating to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

journey to Hibariyama—her exile—does not only trigger her religious awakening (*hosshin* 発心) but also indicates a constant renegotiation of gender-power imbalance between Pure Land Buddhist ideology and social customs which mutually influenced each other in casting transgressing women as religious outcasts in late medieval Japanese society.

Chūjōhime, dated to the sixteenth century and owned by Hiroshima University, is a *nara-ehon yokohon* 奈良絵本横本 in 2 volumes (fig. 1 top).[2] *Chūjōhime no honji*, dated 1651 and owned by Tokyo University Library, is a slightly briefer version of the former and a large-format printed book in 2 volumes (fig. 1 bottom).[3] The story in both is as follows: Following her mother's prayers, Chūjōhime is miraculously conceived through the mercy of the bodhisattva Kannon. Shortly after, Chūjōhime's mother dies (fig. 1) and her father remarries. However, Chūjōhime's veneration for her dead mother and her prospects at court cause the stepmother to become jealous. She falsely accuses Chūjōhime of having an illicit affair with a man (fig. 2), and orders a samurai to abandon Chūjōhime on Hibariyama and to execute her (fig. 3). However, the samurai has pity for the girl and hides her in a hermitage. On a hunting trip Chūjōhime's father discovers the whereabouts of his lost daughter, and parent and child are happily reunited (fig. 4). Upon her return home, however, out of her deep devotion to Amida Buddha Chūjōhime goes against her father's wish to become the emperor's consort. The story concludes with Chūjōhime taking the tonsure, the

[2] A *yokohon* is a one-sided-stitched book. In addition to the Hiroshima University version, other textual and pictorial reproductions of *Chūjōhime* are also in the possession of Jissen Joshi University Library (*nara-ehon yokohon*, 3 vols.), The National Diet Library (*yokohon*, 2 vols.), Saga-ken Taku-shi-ritsu Library (*nara-ehon*, 2 vols.), Keio University (*nara-ehon yokohon*, 1 vol.), and Tohoku University Library (*nara-ehon yokohon*, 2 vols.).

[3] A *honji* 本地 or *honji mono* 本地物 refers to a tale of the earthly suffering of the protagonist who is subsequently revealed as a Buddha or a bodhisattva born among human beings to show the way of salvation. In the case of *Chūjōhime no honji*, Chūjōhime is not revealed as an incarnation of a specific Buddha or bodhisattva, although the *Taima Mandala* is certainly intended to offer salvation to mankind and Chūjōhime's earthly suffering calls to mind the earthly suffering of deities incarnate in other Buddhist narratives. Reproductions of *Chūjōhime no honji* are also owned by The National Diet Library (same edition as the Tokyo University Library plus a further copy of the same without a date), and by Tokyo University Library (printed large-format book in 2 vols. and dated 1665). Modern typeset reproductions of both *Chūjōhime* and *Chūjōhime no honji* appear in Matsumoto Ryūshin hen 松本隆信編 *Muromachi jidai monogatari taisei* 室町時代物語大成 vol. 9 (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1987–1988).

creation of the *Taima mandala*, and Amida Buddha—at the moment of her death—welcoming her into the Pure Land (fig. 5).

Otogi zōshi are a synthesis of religious tales (*setsuwa* 説話), tales of the origin of deities (*honji mono* 本地物), and origin legends of temples and shrines (*jisha engi* 寺社縁起). However, the most important characteristic of *otogi zōshi* is the moral and religious lesson they convey, and their references to the rewards of religious belief and moral conduct which are carefully woven into the fabric of tales deriving from oral tradition—such as the episode of Chūjōhime's journey to Hibariyama which originated with the *Taima mandala sho* 当麻曼荼羅疏, a commentary on the *Taima mandala* dated 1436 and compiled by the monk Yūjo Shōsō 西誉聖聡 (1366–1440), in conjunction with the proselytization of faith in the *Taima mandala* by itinerant monks/ nuns (*etoki hoshi* 絵解き法師) along the Kumano pilgrimage route in the fifteenth century.[4] Both *Chūjōhime* and *Chūjōhime no honji* refer to Hibariyama as a remote mountain in Arita, Kii province:

> もののふをめし。なんち、きいのくに。ありたのこうり。ひばり山と、いふところにて。かうべをはねよ。
>
> "You, take the princess to Hibariyama in the Arita region of Kii Province and cut off her head. Afterwards, carefully perform a memorial service for the deceased."

Today, this location is Arita city 有田市 in Wakayama prefecture, where Tokushō-ji 得生寺 serves as a reminder of Chūjōhime's journey to Hibariyama (fig. 6).

Some *otogi zōshi* are secular embellishments of Buddhist narratives depicted primarily in narratives of stepchildren's journeys into exile—as for example Chūjōhime's journey to Hibariyama in *Chūjōhime* and *Chūjōhime no honji*—focusing on the physical and emotional struggles of the heroine, who, following her banishment into exile and wandering in the remote Hibariyama, is rewarded with her attainment of salvation.

However, most important, exile also provided an environment by which those removed from spheres of power narrated their own lives, strategically employing images of the center and its margins to emphasize their marginalization.

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[4] Ishikawa Rikizan 石川力山 et al., *Nihon bukkyō jinmei jiten* 日本仏教人名辞典 (Tokyo: Hozokan, 1992), 374.

The theme of the "exiled and wandering noble" (*kishu ryūritan* 貴種流離譚) was first introduced in 1924 by the Japanese ethnologist, Orikuchi Shinobu 折口信夫 (1887–1953), in his book *Nihon bungaku no hassei* 日本文学の発生 (*The Emergence of Japanese Literature*).[5] According to Orikuchi, the concept of the "exiled and wandering noble" provided an important link connecting the earliest stories of the gods as found in the *Kojiki* with the growth of an indigenous Japanese literary tradition, linking mythology with historical and literary narratives.

Orikuchi suggests that stories centering on the "exiled and wandering noble" all consist of three distinctive narrative elements: 1) a hero or heroine of high or even divine birth, 2) the theme of exile or wandering, and 3) the remote location of this exile at the margins, tracing a movement of the protagonist from the center to the margin. Furthermore, Orikuchi mentions the theme of transgression as an important prerequisite for the protagonist's exile to occur.[6]

Therefore, Orikuchi considers the trope of the "exiled and wandering noble" a key element for the interpretation of stories narrating the sorrow of gods and noble heroes who find themselves confined to the margins far away from the heavenly or courtly centers.

Although all characteristic features of the "exiled and wandering noble" are present in *Chūjōhime* and *Chūjōhime no honji*—a heroine of noble/divine birth, an actual locale, the heroine's transgression (even though a distorted one), her banishment from the capital to exile in the remote mountains, and her suffering and sadness in the human world—they fail to explain the ideological double-bind of Chūjōhime as religious and social outcast. The problem with Orikuchi's theory is that he considers the discursive construction and destruction of the categories of center and margin only in terms of space—the places facilitating the protagonist's centralization and marginalization—but not in terms of ideology—the processes underlying the protagonist's centralization and marginalization.

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[5] Orikuchi Shinobu, the most well-known scholar of Japanese ethnology (*minzokugaku* 民族学), held a prominent post at Kokugakuin University in Tokyo from 1922–1953. In search for the archaic origins of a uniquely Japanese cultural heritage, Orikuchi developed the theme of the "exiled and wandering noble" (*kishu ryūritan*). This definition refers to old stories (*tan* 譚) that narrate the exile and/ or wandering (*ryūri* 流離) of persons of high birth (*kishu* 貴種) to lowly and marginal places. Orikuchi Shinobu, *Orikuchi Shinobu zenshū* 折口信夫全集, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1995), 296.

[6] Ibid., 298.

Thus, in analyzing Chūjōhime's journey to Hibariyama—her exile—in order to shed light on the boundaries between the religious and social constructions of gender in *Chūjōhime* and *Chūjōhime no honji*, we need to focus on the specific processes through which center and margin are discursively redefined. My discussion of Chūjōhime's journey to Hibariyama investigates how narratives imagining exile asserted specific visions of both center and margin. This approach implies that existing constellations of power were always the subject of negotiation and contestation, and that new centers and margins could emerge as people continually re-imagined and reconfigured their relation within the religious and social order.

In *Chūjōhime* and *Chūjōhime no honji*, we can identify two different processes underlying Chūjōhime's marginalization: first, the Buddhist attitude towards women—not being able to attain enlightenment in their female bodies due to their sex. Second, the power structure of the patriarchal system presenting Chūjōhime as a social outcast because she transgresses the bounds of her social role and neglects her duty of filial piety vis-à-vis her father.

The Buddhist theme of female salvation, particularly the salvation of women, especially mothers, in these *otogi zōshi* is emphasized by this family drama of the heroine's relationship to her three parental figures—her dead mother, her stepmother, and her father. Shortly after Chūjōhime's birth her mother dies, and her father remarries. Chūjōhime treats the stepmother as if she were her own flesh and blood, but at the same time she also continues to perform memorial services in honor of her dead mother. Enraged by jealousy over Chūjōhime's deep veneration for her dead mother and the girl's prospects at court, the stepmother banishes Chūjōhime from the capital. However, the stepmother's plan to cut the ties between Chūjōhime and her deceased mother, her father, and the emperor backfires. Ironically, it is precisely Chūjōhime's marginalization as the "exiled and wandering heroine" that results in her spiritual awakening, which strengthens the bond between her and her parents, especially between her and her mother. Chūjōhime's awakening—which occurs during her exile at Hibariyama—is not the realization of her mother's absence but her realization that all her suffering is caused by the stepmother's slander as stated in the following passage:

> 姫君つらつらおもひ給けるは、「かくはかりうきために逢ぬる事も、継母のにくみふかきゆへたり。あはれまとの母世ましまさは、かくうき事にはよもあはし。今生て

> こそ縁うすくとも、後世にはひとつ所にむまれあひたて
> まつるよしもかな」とそおほしける。
>
> The princess thought carefully: "The reason why I encountered this misery is because of my stepmother's profound hatred. If I were in the same world as my real mother, such misery would hardly occur. Though in this present life my fate is painful suffering, in the afterworld I want to be born in a place where I will be free from suffering."[7]

As indicated by this passage, Chūjōhime's awakening results from her own psychological crisis—her physical and emotional suffering at the hands of her evil stepmother which reaches its peak with her journey to Hibariyama—causing Chūjōhime's longing for her mother, and her wish to be reunited with her mother in the afterworld.

Chūjōhime's prolonged mourning for her dead mother—who resides in the "other world"—leads to great disorder and suffering. A similar story, where a child mourns and longs for his dead mother in the "other world," and is exiled as a consequence, is the banishment of the god Susano-o-no-mikoto in the *Kojiki*. Following the death of Izanami-no-mikoto, her husband, Izanagi-no-mikoto, divides his rule among his children.[8]

In contrast to his brother and sister, Susano-o-no-mikoto rejects this order of succession and instead engages in deep mourning for his dead mother. Therefore, Amaterasu Ōmikami banishes Susano-o-no-mikoto—not only once but twice—from the heavenly plain. Not only does he ignore his sister's first order of exile and challenges her authority as ruler, but he commits a series of transgressions which cause Amaterasu Ōmikami to hide in a cave taking the sunlight with her. In the end, Susano-o-no-mikoto is exiled to Izumo.[9] Orikuchi describes Susano-o-no-mikoto's exile as follows:

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[7] This passage is taken from the *Taima-dera engi emaki* 当麻寺縁起絵巻, which is dated 1531 and owned by Taima-dera, Taima-cho, Nara Prefecture. The English translation is my own. See Monika Dix, "Writing Women into Religious Histories: Re-reading Representations of Chūjōhime in Medieval Japanese Buddhist Narratives," (Ph.D. Dissertation) (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2006), 113–114.

[8] Donald L. Philipi, trans. *Kojiki* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo, 1968), 72–3.

[9] Ibid., 76.

> His mother's land (*haha kuni* 母国) Susano-o-no-mikoto cried longing for, turning green mountains barren, and from which Inahi-no-mikoto came riding along the wave tops, is the spiritual homeland that our ancestors longed for. Generations of storytellers have explained that it is called their mother's land because [Susano-o-no-mikoto's mother] Izanami and [Inahi-no-mikoto's mother] Tamayorihime retired there, but the truth is that these stories narrate the longing felt by all people for the original land (*mototsu kuni* 本つ国).[10]

Orikuchi's use of the phrase *mototsu kuni* is a reference to the otherworldly realm (*tokoyo* 常世), re-presented as the eternal realm of the gods. Thus, this otherworldly realm provides an important context for the trope of the "exiled and wandering noble."[11] The theme of a child longing for his/her dead mother, inspired a vast body of stories that narrate the sorrow of the gods and noble heroes and heroines who find themselves far away from the heavenly or courtly center – such as Chūjōhime. This aspect is significant regarding the popularity of Chūjōhime's expanded narrative combining a stepchild story with a Buddhist account of female salvation, particularly the salvation of a mother which is the reason for the heroine's journey to Hibariyama.

The salvation of mothers by their sons is a traditional and well-known theme in East Asian Buddhism.[12] Two of the most famous accounts of sons saving their mothers are the hagiographic narratives of the monk Genshin (942–1017) and the monk Mokuren. Genshin arrives at his mother's deathbed and chants the *rinjū nenbutsu* 臨終念仏 to facilitate his mother's birth in Amida's Pure Land.[13] Unlike Genshin, Mokuren arrives too late; his mother has already passed away and fallen into hell. In order to save his mother, Mokuren visits her in hell and,

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[10] Orikuchi, Orikuchi Shinobu zenshū, 299.

[11] Between the eighth and fourteenth centuries, Shinto was almost completely absorbed by Buddhism, and known as "dual Shinto" (*ryōbu Shinto* 両部神道). From the early fifteenth century onward Shinto reemerged as the primary belief system, developed its own philosophy and scripture (based on Buddhist and Confucian canons), and became a nationalistic force.

[12] Alan Cole, *Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 57–58.

[13] For a complete hagiography of Genshin see Miyazaki Enjun 宮崎遠順, "Genshin wajō no betsuden nit suite 源信和尚の別伝について," in Miyazaki Enjun, ed., *Chūsei bukkyō to shomin seikatsu* 中世仏教と庶民生活 (Tokyo: Shibunkaku, 1987). For an English translation of Mokuren's story see Hank Glassman, trans., "Mokuren no sōshi," in *Buddhist Literature* 1 (1999): 120–161.

through his virtue of having become a monk and his recitation of the *Lotus Sutra*, he is able to save his mother. As the Confucian notion of filial piety penetrated Buddhism in medieval Japan, both parents were included in their children's prayers. This aspect is illustrated in the accounts of Genshin and Mokuren, as well as in *Chūjōhime* and *Chūjōhime no honji* where Chūjōhime, prior to her intended execution, recites the *Pure Land-Praising Sutra* (*Shōsan jōdo kyō* 称賛浄土経) for the salvation of her mother, father, and herself.[14] However, when it comes to the actual point of saving one's parents from falling into hell, almost all stories tell of sons saving their mothers from hell, but we rarely encounter narratives in which sons save their fathers or daughters their mothers. This suggests the extent to which faith itself came to be gendered. Chūjōhime's legend is of interest because it appears to be the only extant medieval Japanese account where a daughter takes the tonsure at a very young age, leaves her family and therefore neglects her duty of filial piety towards her father in order to save her mother. What is the significance of this gender reversal? How is this particular portrayal of Chūjōhime as pious nun and unfilial daughter vis-à-vis her father important for reading this Buddhist tale of female salvation in terms of gender marginalization? To what extent does the journey to Hibariyama narrative trope aid in communicating Buddhist values regarding women and salvation and Confucian values concerning women and filial piety?

According to medieval Japanese Buddhist ideology, women are seen as impure based on the concept of the Five Hindrances (*goshō* 五障), which came to be equated with women's inferiority and female moral characteristics such as deceit, greed, and impurity. Works, as for example the *Kojiki* and the *Shinto shū*, exerted a great influence on medieval stepchild tales—such as the one of Chūjōhime—because the deities in these stories undergo the same suffering that human beings do, and since they become deities at the end of their suffering, they understand and redeem human suffering as well.[15] I propose that Chūjōhime—based on

[14] The *Pure Land-Praising Sutra* is a seventh-century translation of the *Smaller Sukhāvatīvyūha Sutra*. This sutra was popular during the Nara period (710–794) due to its association with the Hosso Buddhist sect. It was also the sutra believed to have been copied eighteen hundred times by scribes of the Kokubun-ji and Kokubun-ni-ji to commemorate the death of Empress Kōmyō in 760. See Hank Glassman, "Show me the Place Where My Mother Is!," in Richard K. Payne & Kenneth K.Tanaka, eds., *Approaching the Land of Bliss: Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitabha* (Honolulu: Kuroda Institute, University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 158.

[15] Hank Glassman, "Show me the Place Where My Mother Is!," in Richard K. Payne & Kenneth K. Tanaka, eds., *Approaching the Land of Bliss: Religious*

her extreme religious devotion and exemplary act of filial piety to her mother—all performed in the body of a young girl—is precisely one of these deities, namely a bodhisattva in the guise of a seven-year-old girl.

The story of the Dragon King's eight-year-old daughter attaining enlightenment in the "Devadatta" chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* is frequently cited as exemplary proof that women can attain enlightenment once their female bodies have changed into male ones. Although this story was an inspiration for medieval female audiences in their quest for enlightenment, the story is problematic—in addition to the fact that it does not explain how this sex change occurs—because a male body is eventually acquired in the end.

In the sixth chapter of the *Sutra on the Original Vow of the Bodhisattva Jizō* (*Jizō bosatsu hongan kyō* 地蔵菩薩本願経), we find a slightly different story related to women's attainment of salvation. Śākyamuni Buddha promises all women a future free of female rebirth if they worship the bodhisattva Jizō:

> If there are women who detest the body of a woman, and who wholeheartedly make offerings to the image of Jizō, whether the image be a painting or made of stone, clay or metal, and if they do so day after day without fail, continually using flowers, incense, food, drink, clothing, colored silks, banners, money, jewels and other items as offerings, when the female bodies received as retribution in that particular life by those good women come to an end, for hundreds of thousands aeons, they will never again be reborn in worlds where there are women, much less be born as one, unless it be through the strength of their compassionate vows to take on a woman's body voluntarily in order to liberate human beings. By receiving the power resulting from these offerings to Jizō and the power of meritorious virtues, they will not undergo retribution in the bodies of women throughout hundreds and thousands of aeons.[16]

This passage also supports the *henjō nanshi* 変成男子 Buddhist concept that a woman's body is the result of her past bad karma, should be reviled by her, and she should strive for rebirth in a male body.[17] While

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Praxis in the Cult of Amitabha (Honolulu: Kuroda Institute, University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 158. 56.

[16] Buddhist Text Translation Society, *Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva* (Talmage, CA: Dharma Realm Buddhist University, 1982), 39.

[17] Bernard Faure, *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender*

the sutra is of male authorship and reflects the gender ideology of a patriarchal society, women were aware of such teachings. To many, the fate of having been born in a female body rather than in a male one, with its risks of death in childbirth or inferior position or abuse at the hands of their husbands or their in-laws, as well as other hardships, may have seemed as the kind of karmic retribution clearly communicated through this passage.[18]

However, what is new and striking about this passage is the fact that beings who enjoy their female bodies are promised by Jizō rebirth as a beautiful and noble lady. Therefore, the *Sutra on the Original Vow of the Bodhisattva Jizō* has issues of gender and female sexuality as its basic doctrine, and seems—at a first glance—to contradict the Buddhist ideology of *henjō nanshi*. Recalling the scene of Chūjōhime's birth, the *Taima-dera engi emaki* mentions in detail the beauty of the girl:

> まことにこれ観音大士のさつくる所なれば、花のかほはせ花よりもあさや
> かに、玉のすがた玉よりもきょし。父のおとどことに寵愛をくはへ、
> 「后妃女御にもたてん」とおほしけるなるべし。
>
> Since the child was conceived through Kannon's blessing, the child's face was more beautiful than any flower and she was purer than any jewel. […] She will probably advance to the rank of a court lady or even that of an empress.[19]

Do these two references to the beauty of a female body contradict the *henjō nanshi* religious patriarchal construct? The *Sutra on the Original Vow of the Bodhisattva Jizō* contains two stories of daughters who, through their sincere filial piety, save their mothers from hell. The first story tells about Jizō being a holy Brahman woman whose mother, upholding wrong views and ridiculing the Three Jewels before her death, suffered in the uninterrupted hell. The filial daughter was empowered to go to hell and save her mother. The second story tells of Jizō being a woman called "Bright Eyes" whose mother fell into an evil path where

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(Princeton: Princeton University Pess, 2003), 106.

[18] Glassman, "The Nude Jizō at Denkō-ji," in Barbara Ruch, ed., *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002), 400.

[19] For the complete Japanese passage and English translation see Dix, "Writing Women into Religious Histories," 103–104.

she suffered greatly because she enjoyed eating fish, turtles, and the like and as a result took thousands of lives. The deceased mother was reborn as a maidservant's son in Bright Eyes' house and was punished by having a short lifespan. When Bright Eyes found out about this, she vowed to devote all her future lives to save other beings if her mother was released from this evil path.[20] The lesson learned from these didactic tales is that after a parent's death, a filial child's good deeds are the only effective means to save one from suffering in the hells. In other words the deceased is completely powerless in terms of their fate, except for depending solely on their surviving relatives, especially their children.

The key to understanding why Chūjōhime in these *otogi zōshi* resembles a bodhisattva in human form is her age. We are told that she is seven years old at the point of her mother's passing. According to Buddhist ideology, it is precisely because Chūjōhime has not reached puberty yet—as is also the case with the eight-year old daughter of the dragon king who attained enlightenment—that her body has not turned into the defiled reproductive vessel of a woman. Therefore, Chūjōhime does not transgress religious norms because a bodhisattva is as genderless as a little girl who has not reached puberty yet, and is not challenging the *henjō nanshi* concept of gender marginalization. In fact, this emphasis on her "asexuality" as a bodhisattva enhances the Buddhist doctrine of *henjō nanshi* even more because it foreshadows her faith of being confined to her female sexuality and with this to the reproductive cycle of wives and mothers. Her only way of escape from this female body – as evident from Chūjōhime's mother's last words, is the main obstruction for women's attainment of salvation, is the transformation of her female body into that of a male; it is her only possibility being born in Amida's Pure Land.

In conclusion, Chūjōhime's journey to Hibariyama—her exile initiated by the wicked stepmother—not only serves as the incentive for the heroine's religious awakening, but also indicates a constant renegotiation of gender-power imbalance between Pure Land Buddhist ideology and social customs which mutually influenced each other in casting transgressing women as religious and social outcasts in late medieval Japanese society.

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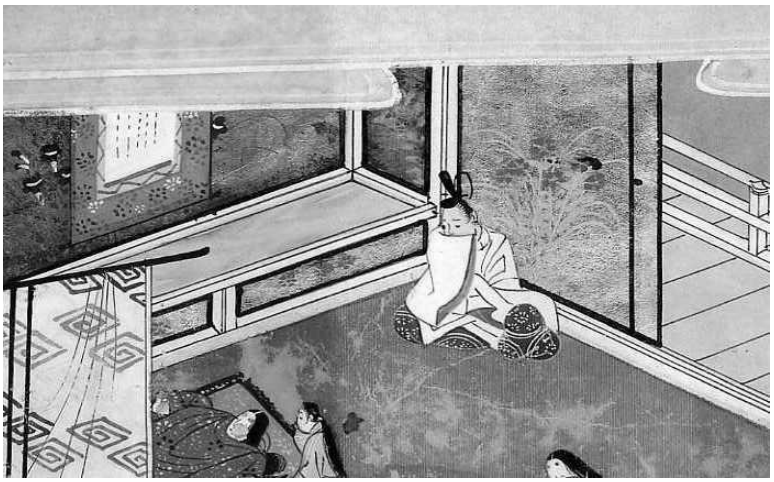
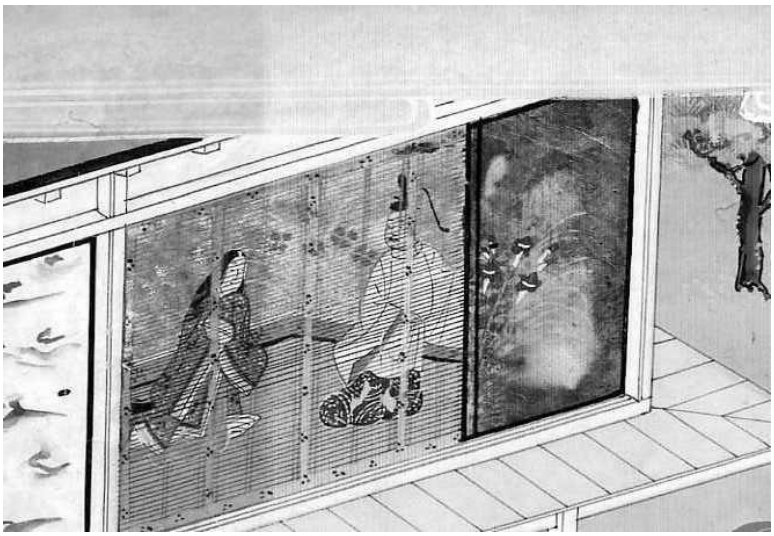
[20] Buddhist Text Translation Society, Sutra of the Past Vows of the Earth Store Bodhisattva, 42–44.



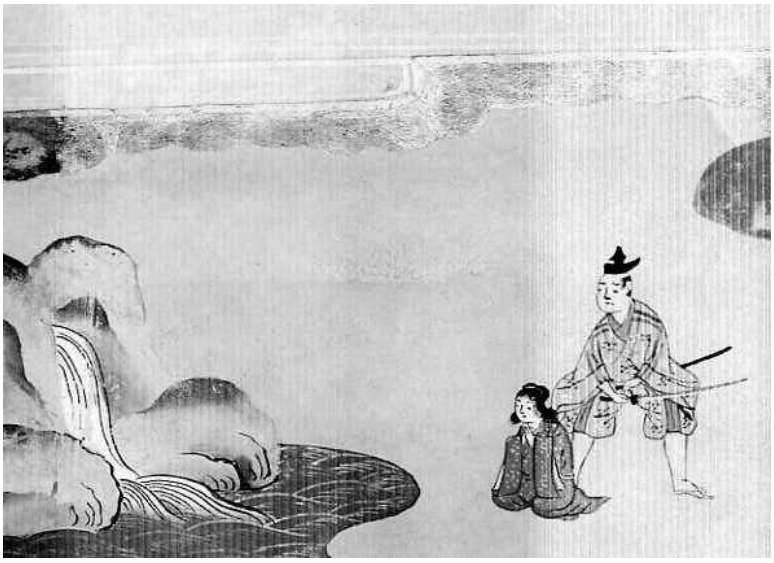
Chūjōhime

Chūjōhime no honji
Fig. 1



Chūjōhime

Chūjōhime no honji
Fig. 2



Chūjōhime

Chūjōhime no honji
Fig. 3

Chūjōhime

Chūjōhime no honji
Fig. 4

Chūjōhime

Chūjōhime no honji
Fig 5

Tokushō-ji
Fig. 6

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