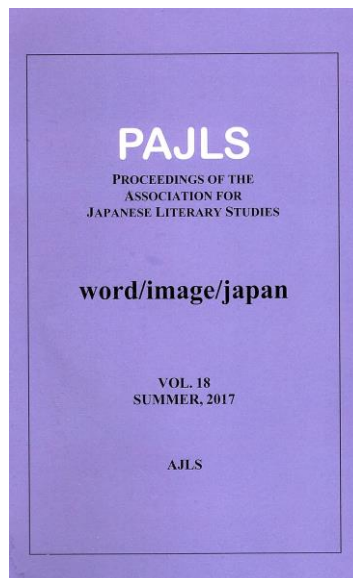


“Textuality and Its Material Display in the *Taima-Dera Jikkai-Zu Byōbu*”

Monika Dix 

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**TEXTUALITY AND ITS MATERIAL DISPLAY IN THE  
*TAIMA-DERA JIKKAI-ZU BYŌBU***

Monika Dix  
*Saginaw Valley State University*

Japanese art and literature alike have used space to present both past and present experiences. This paper is about the visual culture of narrating spaces focusing on two interrelated aspects of cultural tension: the redefinition of reading and interpreting which results from the canonization of texts and images attached to space. It is prompted by a curiosity about the nature of narrated spaces and spatial texts evoked in Japanese Buddhist paintings known as “transformed visions” or *hensō-zu*. Based on Buddhist sūtras, *hensō-zu* are visual presentations of Buddhist paradises and hells, various manifestations of deities, and scenes of miraculous transformations. Sponsored by both the Buddhist clergy and laity, *hensō-zu* served as central icons of worship in temples, for ritual purposes, and stimulated the public imagination. One such example is the *Taima mandara*, which is a “transformed vision” of Amida Buddha’s Pure Land Western Paradise (*gokuraku ōjō*) and the central icon of worship at Taima-dera, a Buddhist temple of the Pure Land sect (*Jōdo-shū*) in Taimachō, Kitakatsuragi-gun, Nara prefecture. The *Taima mandara* is a visualization of Shantao’s (613-681) commentary (*Kangyō Shichō-sho*) on the *Sūtra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Infinite Life* (*Kanmuryōju-kyō*) that focuses on the sixteen meditations by means of which one attains birth in Amida’s Pure Land. Shantao’s commentary consists of four chapters, which are visually portrayed as the “Court of the Central Doctrine” (*gengibun*) in the center, depicting a glorious palatial architecture symbolizing the Pure Land in front of which are seated Amida and his bodhisattvas, Kannon and Seishi, facing a pond from which enlightened beings are being born on lotus flowers; the “Court of the Prefatory Legend” (*jobungi*) on the left, depicting the story of Queen Idaike who attained enlightenment through faith in Amida; the “Court of Specific Contemplations” (*jōzengi*) on the right, depicting a series of thirteen meditations devotees have to practice in order to attain birth in the Pure Land; and the “Court of the Nine Grades”

(*sanzeni*) on the bottom, depicting the nine different grades (*kuhon*) people can be born into Amida's Pure Land based on their karma. Needless to say, the *Taima mandara* presents a distinct pictorial - situational "spatial" logic in terms of "narrated spaces" and "spatial texts," thereby creating a world view of its own.<sup>1</sup>

The characterization of *hensō-zu* like the *Taima mandara* as a domain of its own may be used to highlight the coherence and continuity of spaces, or it may be used to foreground the discontinuity between domains of experiences, or spaces. This concept is revived in the *Taima-dera Folding Screens Illustrating the Ten Realms (Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu)* as an enabling analytic construct to meet the redefinition of reading and interpreting the *Taima mandara* in early modern Japan. The *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* is a set of six paneled folding screens, which are preserved in the inner sanctuary at Taima-dera.<sup>2</sup> "Pictures of the Ten Realms" (*jikkai-zu*) are a genre of Japanese Buddhist painting that comprises the six realms of transmigratory existence, which are those of the gods (*ten*) humans (*ningen*), fighting demons (*ashura*), animals (*chikushō*), hungry ghosts (*gaki*), and hell (*jigoku*); and the four realms of enlightened existence, which are those of the Buddhist teachings (*shōmon*),

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<sup>1</sup> When reading the *Taima mandara* visually, the viewer begins at the lower part of the "Court of the Prefatory Legend"; moves up to the top of the court, skips over to the "Court of Specific Contemplations"; reads down to the right-hand corner to the beginning of the "Court of the Nine Grades", which is then read from right to left across; and arrives back at the initial starting point. This ritual circumambulation before focusing on the central image of Amida's Pure Land in the "Court of the Central Doctrine," corresponds to the teachings as they unfold sequentially in the *Sūtra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Infinite Life* and as outlined in Shantao's commentary.

<sup>2</sup> Each six-paneled screen of the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* is painted with color and gold, and measures 142.2cm in length and 305.0 cm in width. Takagishi Akira, *Power and Painting in Muromachi Japan*, (Kyoto: Daigaku gakujitsu shuppankai, 2004) 11. Based on art historical evidence, most scholars attribute the screens to the Tosa school and date them to the Muromachi period. However, based on the fact the earliest extant written record mentioning the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* is the *Honchō e-shi*, which dates to 1693, and the revival movement of the *Taima mandara* in conjunction with temple repairs in the late Muromachi and early Edo period, the date of this work remains disputed. Ibid. 51-53.

self-enlightened beings (*engaku*), bodhisattvas (*bosatsu*), and Buddhas (*hotoke*).<sup>3</sup> The first six are collectively known as the “Six Realms of Karmic Rebirth” (*rokudō*).<sup>4</sup> In Japan, the origin of *jikkai-zu*, which depict the suffering in the circle of rebirth in order for devotees to aspire to birth in Amida’s Pure Land, can be traced back to the

Heian period (794-1185). From the Kamakura period (1185-1333) onward, with the growth and popularization of Pure Land Buddhism, variations of the *jikkai-zu* appeared. In the Edo period (1600-1868), the Buddhist concept of *jikkai-zu* did not only influence art, but also literature such as the vernacular Buddhist treatise titled *The Diagram of the Ten Realms of Mind – Learning* (*Shingaku jikkai no zu*).

The *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* is of particular interest because, unlike other “Pictures of the Ten Realms,” the two highest realms of enlightened existence – namely those of the bodhisattvas and buddhas – are replaced by the *Taima mandara*. In addition, another unusual feature of the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* are the twenty-four ornate inscribed pieces of paper (*shikishi*), attached to the screens – twelve of them are written in classical Chinese and refer to passages from Buddhist treatises, and twelve of them are written in native Japanese and refer to Japanese poems (*waka*) from imperial anthologies.

This paper examines the reflexive interplay between the textual and visual configurations in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu*, particularly in terms of the popularization of vernacular Buddhist tales (*bukkyō setsuwa*) in association with a revival movement of the *Taima mandara* in the Edo period. A detailed analysis regarding the role of the *Taima mandara*, Buddhist treatises, and *waka* poetry in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* emphasizes them as integral aspects of a Japanese aesthetic culture in which the accumulation of visual and textual memories

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<sup>3</sup> Pictorial illustrations of all Ten Realms are rare, but the most well-known variations include *Picture of the Ten Dharma Realms for Perfect and Sudden Meditation on the Mind* (*Endon kanjin jūhōkkai-zu*) and the *Kumano Ten Worlds Mandala* (*Kumano kanjin jikkai mandara*).

<sup>4</sup> The Six Realms of Karmic Rebirth are also translated as *rokudō-rinne* or *mutsu no sekai*.

enhances the appreciation of fictional spaces as reality. My goal is to show that the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* acts as a means of understanding the matrix of symbolic images and spatial topoi in the configuration of authority, identity, and memory in early modern Japan.

Visual and textual expressions of place-making signal a cultural presence and give the place a social significance. At the same time, it is in the social construction of a place or scene that peoples' identities unfold. In this sense, landscapes – both real and imaginary – like the “Ten Realms” depicted in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu*, are meaningful, socially constructed places. All landscapes embody memories, and it is through memories that the past is continuously drawn into the present as identities are crafted. Since inscriptions function as permanent marks in landscapes, they also function as a memory trigger. Even after the original meaning of an inscription is forgotten, the mark – fixed in the landscape – participates in peoples' construction of their world.<sup>5</sup>

At first glance, the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* appears to be foremost an imaginary landscape in the sense that the “Ten Realms” are landscapes based solely on Buddhist ideology, the idea that after death people are reborn in the six realms until they are released from the karmic cycle of suffering and become enlightened beings born in Amida's Pure Land.<sup>6</sup> However, in Japan this imaginary landscape has played an important role in peoples' construction of their world - it has become a socially constructed landscape involving physical and cognitive experiences associated with the real landscape of *Taima-dera*.

The narrative threads that weave through the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* are spun from Taima-dera's geographical and religious significance. The Taima-Katsuragi area is situated at the eastern foot of the Nijo-Katsuragi-Kongo Mountains bordering Nara and Osaka prefectures. Recensions of Taima-dera's foundation legend, an essential component among the motifs that

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<sup>5</sup> Bruno David and Meredith Wilson, *Inscribed Landscapes: Marking and Making Place* (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Allan Andrews, *The Teachings Essential for Rebirth: A Study of Genshin's Ōjōyōshū* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1970).

appear in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu*, reveal both the history and divine presence of this temple. The earliest extant reference to Taima-dera is found in the *Record of Pilgrimage of the Kenkyū Era (Kenkyū go junrei-ki)* dated 1191. According to this record, Taima-dera was originally built in 612 as Manpōzo-in, but in 692 – following Prince Maroko’s<sup>7</sup> auspicious dream that the temple should be moved to a sacred site associated with the Nara-period mountain ascetic En no Gyōja – Taima-dera was erected at its present location in the Taima-Katsuragi area. The *Kenkyū go junrei-ki* also mentions the story of the legendary eighth-century noblewoman, Chūjōhime, whose devotion to Amida caused the appearance of a mysterious nun and a mysterious woman, who, in one single night, wove the *Taima mandara*.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, every year on May 14, the Splendid “Lecture of Welcoming” ritual, called *mukaekō*, is held at Taima-dera and it reenacts the arrival of Amida and a host of bodhisattvas to welcome Chūjōhime to the Pure Land in honor of the creation of the *Taima mandara*.<sup>9</sup>

World-making is essentially a spatial metaphor and can be applied to the *Taima mandara* in terms of unifying real and imaginary spaces in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu*. According to Victor Mair, having surveyed definitions of the term “transformation,” he concludes that: 1) a transformation is the “representation” (verbal or pictorial) of a narrative moment or locus, or a succession of narrative moments or loci; and 2) a transformation has an element of the supernatural. Therefore, a

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<sup>7</sup> Emperor Yōmei’s (r. 585-587) third son.

<sup>8</sup> For details regarding the relationship between Taima-dera’s origin legend, the production of the *Taima mandara*, and the Legend of Chūjōhime see Chapter Two of my Ph.D. Dissertation, Monica Dix, “Writing Women into Religious Histories: Re-Reading Representations of Chūjōhime in Medieval Japanese Buddhist Narratives” (Vancouver: U of British Columbia, 2006) 15-74. For a general history about Taima-dera see Taimachō kyōiku inkai, *Taimachō-shi* (Taimachō: Taimachō kyōiku inkai, 1976). The year 2012 marked the 1400th anniversary of the founding of the Manpōzō-in, the temple thought to have been the precursor of Taimadera, and 2013 is the 1250th year since Chūjōhime’s faith was responsible for the weaving of the Taima Mandara in 763.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed description about the *mukaekō* at Taima-dera see Gail Chin Bryant, “The *Mukaekō* of Taimadera: A Case of Salvation Re-enacted,” *Cahiers d’ Extrême-Asie* 8, (1995): 325-334.

transformation is thus at once a “moment,” in other words, at once temporally and spatially conceived. The “moment” fittingly describes the nature of the verbal narrative that is the “transformation text,” a medium driven by temporality; the “locus” captures the dynamics of visual representation that is the “transformed vision” which thrives on spatiality. The “locus” amounts to a scene with its full force of the visual (79-80).<sup>10</sup>

In terms of pictorial analysis, the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* unfolds as follows from right to left: The first two panels depict the realm of hell, where sinners arrive in front of “The Old Woman of the River of the Three Ways” (*datsueba sanzū no kawa no baba*) who strips souls of their clothes and hangs them from a tree. Then the souls are captured by the demon guardians of hell and presented to King Enma’s court where they are judged for their sins and sent to one of the eight hot hells (*hachinetsu jigoku*) – in this case souls are transported in burning carriages to the hell of the searing heat. The third panel depicts the “Blade Tree” or *Tōyōrin*, one of the sixteen satellite hells of the “Hell of Assembly” (*shugō jigoku*), where sinners climb blade trees out of their own volition, driven by desire for the apparition of a beautiful woman who beckons to them from the top, just to have their bodies shredded by the blades; the realm of the hungry ghosts who suffer because they cannot saturate their hunger and thirst; and the realms of animals. Panels four to nine illustrate the realm of human beings, with the exception of panel five which, additionally, depicts the realm of fighting demons. Panels ten and eleven depict the realm of heavenly beings – the most favorable form of rebirth in the six realms of trans-migratory existence, as well as the realms of the Buddhist teachings and self-enlightened beings, which belong to the four realms of enlightened existence; and panel twelve concludes with the *Taima mandara*, which represents the realms of both bodhisattvas and Buddhas. The substitution of the *Taima mandara* for the highest realms of enlightened existence in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* is a unique characteristic that is not found in any other variants of *jikkai-zu*. But the *Taima*

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<sup>10</sup> Victor Mair, *T’ang Transformation Texts: A Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama in China* (Cambridge: Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph, 1989) 79-80.

*mandara* does more than just serving at the temple's central icon of worship and visually connecting spaces in these screens.

In addition to this depiction of Hell and Amida's Pure Land as both transcendent and earthly landscapes in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu*, the textual representation of these landscapes as regenerative spaces of historical recognition, power, faith, and identity within the locale of Taima-dera is also a unique feature. Attached to each panel are two *shikishi* totaling twenty-four for both screens. One of each contains passages from two specific Buddhist texts or *shakkyō* – either the *Kanmuryōju-kyō* or the *The Essential Practices Required for Birth in the Pure Land (Ōjōyōshū)*<sup>11</sup> - written in classical Chinese; the other one contains *waka* from Heian and Kamakura-period Imperial Anthologies (*chokusenshū*) – namely the *Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern (Kokinwaka-shū)* dated 905, the *Collection of Golden Leaves (Kin'yōwaka-shū)* dated 1127, the *Collection of a Thousand Years (Senzaiwaka-shū)* dated 1187, the *New Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern (Shinkokinwaka-shū)* dated 1205, and the *Later Collection of Gleanings Continued (Shokugoshūiwaka-shū)* dated 1326 written in Japanese *kana*.<sup>12</sup>

What is the significance of pairing these *shakkyō* and *waka* passages against the larger pictorial framework of the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu*? In other words, how do they enhance the nature of the “verbal narrative” of the “transformation text” and the “visual representation” of the “transformed vision”? How do the spatial texts aid in the transmission of knowledge, especially the accumulation of pictorial and literary memories, which enhance the appreciation of fictional Buddhist places as reality?

In order to shed light on these questions, I have chosen selected *shakkyō* – *waka* pairs, inscribed on *shikishi*, from the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* for my analysis. The *shikishi* are attached to the top of each panel and the *shakkyō* precede the *waka*, except for panels 4, 6, 8, and 9 where this order is reversed. As previously mentioned, eleven out of the twelve screens are “transformed visions” of the “Six Realms of Karmic Rebirth”. The

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<sup>11</sup> Compiled by Genshin in 985.

<sup>12</sup> Takagishi Akira 14-17.



earliest textual reference to the “Six Realms” can be found in *An Account of Miracles in Japan (Nihon ryōiki)*, a collection of religious tales compiled by the monk Kyōkai in the ninth century.<sup>13</sup> However, the most influential descriptions of karmic retribution are found in Genshin’s *Ōjōyōshū*. The first pair of *shikishi* I will examine is attached to panel three of the first set of screens. The *shakkyō* (on the right) describes the “realm of hungry ghosts” in Genshin’s *Ōjōyōshū* and reads:

飢渴常急身体枯尽適望清流走向趣彼或変作火或悉枯  
涸口如針孔腸如大山

The “realm of hungry ghosts” is characterized by great craving and internal starvation; beings who are reborn as hungry ghosts must endure never-ending thirst, hunger, and torture as the result of their *karma*.<sup>14</sup>

Genshin’s descriptions created powerful images in the minds of audiences from the Heian period into the early modern era and were the source for many paintings, including the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu*. The most famous extant paintings of “the realm of the hungry ghosts,” the *Scroll of the Hungry Ghosts (Gaki zōshi)*, designated a National Treasure and dated late twelfth century, displays strong connections to Genshin’s text as well as to the visual illustration in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu*.

The *waka* (on the left) is poem #644 (Book 10: Miscellaneous II) from the *Kin’yōwaka-shū*. It was compiled by the female Heian-period poet, Izumi Shikibu (977?-?) and reads as follows:

あさましやつるきのゑたのたはむまてにはなにの身のな  
れるなるらむ

How wretched! So heavy, the bending branches of blades.  
How deep must have been their sins?

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<sup>13</sup> Kyoko Motomichi Nakamura, *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition: The Nihon ryōiki of the Monk Kyōkai* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1973).

<sup>14</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the translations are my own.

Izumi Shikibu, in her characteristic poetic mode of overflowing passion and overwhelming sentimental appeal, tells us about the *Tōyōrin*, a treacherous tree with blade branches that male sinners climb, driven by the desire for beautiful woman who calls to them from the top. When sinners reach the top of the blade tree, their bodies shredded by the blades, the woman appears below the tree, calling the men to ascend, leaving their bodies to be cut again by the blades as seen in this painting. Unlike in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu*, in the *Kin'yōwaka-shū* this poem is preceded by the following preface (*kotobagaki*):

じごくえにつるきのゑたにひとのつらぬかれたるを  
みてよめる

Upon seeing a person speared on branches of blades in a hell painting, I composed

Which indicates that Izumi Shikibu composed this poem after having seen pictures of the *Tōyōrin*.

In this sense, both Genshin's *shakkyō* and Izumi Shikibu's *waka* emphasize that human suffering is the source of worldly attachments and desires, and that the only way to escape these tortures is to practice the Buddhist teachings. In a similar way that the hungry ghosts are suffering – their bodies are in pain as if pierced by burning spears – the human body is experiencing the same torturous pain being penetrated by the spiky branches of the blade tree.

I have argued elsewhere that the inclusion of the *shakkyō* – *waka* pairs in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* serves to communicate in a more accessible – humanized form – the complex Buddhist teachings in order for believers to aspire to birth in Amida's Pure Land.<sup>15</sup> The *waka* can be seen as a link between the complex Buddhist doctrines and the popular Buddhist narratives, the latter of which served as a powerful propaganda for

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<sup>15</sup> I presented previous research in a paper entitled "Between Text and Image: Literature and Narrating Space in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu*," at the Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting in Honolulu, Hawai'i, April 3, 2011.

converting the masses to the Pure Land faith in the medieval period. Therefore, the imaginary landscape becomes a “place of religious awakening” in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* – a peaceful place of refuge from the “world of spiritual darkness.” Furthermore, the inclusion of secular genre scenes painted on the bottom of the panels – such as sitting under cherry blossoms or composing poetry – correspond to both the sentimental experience in poetry and the suffering of sentient beings in the Buddhist texts.

Although I agree that this is a unique characteristic of the *shakkyō* – *waka* pairs in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu*, I would like to suggest that these “spatial texts” play an even more significant role in conjunction with the visually “narrated spaces” for expressions of place-making within the larger socio-historical context of Taima-dera and the revival of the *Taima mandara* in Edo-period Japan

On the one hand, the interconnectedness among different domains of experiences or spaces calls for a view of cultural continuity and coherence of the past as a distant other, seen from a present perspective. On the other hand, the Buddhist cosmology posits multiple worlds, such as Buddhist paradises and hells, the world of the living and the world of the dead, and the heterogeneous formation of religious and social communities in which visual and textual memories enhance the appreciation of fictional spaces as reality.

Amida’s Pure Land is generally associated with the visual representation of the *Taima mandara*. However, the Pure Land also encompassed larger spatial and trans-historical dimensions, including the concept of the Pure Land on earth. The rationale behind the identification of a certain geographical area of Japan with this particular Buddhist paradise was intimately connected to Taima-dera, which is located at the foot of sacred Mount Katsuragi. Also known as “Hell Valley” (*jogokudani*), Katsuragi mountain was believed to have been both a place where sinners fell into hell, and a place of Pure Bliss where people attained salvation through faith in Amida and the *Taima mandara*.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> In addition to the Katsuragi mountain, Mount Tateyama was also known as the gate to heaven and hell, especially in late medieval and early modern

One of the earliest detailed textual and visual portrayals of hell at Mount Katsuragi is found in the *Miraculous Origin of Taima Temple* (*Taima-dera engi emaki kyōroku-bon*), a set of three narrative handscroll paintings dated 1531 and owned by Taima-dera.<sup>17</sup> In contrast to earlier Kamakura-period records of Chūjōhime's story, such as the *Kenkyū go junrei-ki* and the *Taima mandara engi emaki*, which focus on Chūjōhime's vow to see Amida in human form, the miraculous creation of the *Taima mandara*, and the heroine's attainment of birth in the Pure Land, this Muromachi-period version combines the heroine's religious experiences at Taima-dera with an added narrative of her childhood. Having lost their mother at an early age, Chūjōhime and her brother are abandoned by their wicked stepmother on Mount Katsuragi:

今はほいをとけんとして、都のうちにたけき物のふを  
めしよせて、おほくの引出物  
をいたし、「この人々をみきかさらむとをきさかひ  
へ、くそくして捨置べし。是  
はみ つかからか一大事也。あひかまへて人のみみにも  
らすへからす」とおほせら  
れければ、辞するにあたはず、ふたりの御子をひと  
つこしにのせたてまつりて、  
とおき山路をさして行けるに、この君達、「わらは  
をばいつくべくして行ぞや」  
との給へば、物のふ、「これは母この御わたり候所  
へ」となぐさめたてまつりけ  
れば、「さらばいそぎゆぎてみまいらせむ」とこしの  
うちにてよろこびぬるあり

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periods. See Caroline Hirasawa, *Hell-Bent for Heaven in Tateyama Mandara*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed discussion regarding the production, as well as textual and visual analysis of the *Taima-dera engi emaki* see Chapter Three of my Ph.D. Dissertation, 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) 75-163.

さま、さながら屠所の羊にことならず、かくてはる  
 ばるとゆく程に、名にきくさ  
 へおそろしきかつらぎ山の地獄か谷へくしたてまつ  
 る。かの山は人跡たえはてて、  
 樵子が薪をとる道さへなく、こりしきたる巖のかけ  
 に立より、こしとともにうち  
 捨てにげさりぬ。

She summoned a brave samurai from within the capital, brought out many gifts, and said: “Bring these children to a border region far away, and leave them there. This is a serious [personal] matter, so be careful that nobody hears about this,” and [the samurai] could not refuse her order. He put both children into a palanquin and took them along a distant mountain path. When the children asked: “Are you indeed taking us to a place far away and are getting rid of us?” the samurai comforted them by saying: “I am taking you to the place where your mother is buried.” And overcome with joy, the children in the palanquin said: “If this is true, let’s go quickly and inquire about it.” But in fact the situation did not differ at all from that of sheep in a slaughterhouse because after their journey, they arrived at a place known as ‘Valley of Hell of the Dreadful Katsuragi Mountain.’ On that mountain, where there is no sign of human habitation and no young-cut wood or firewood are found on the path, he abandoned the palanquin with the children on a rock.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, the opening passage from the *Taima-dera engi emaki* further aids in the transmission of knowledge and enhances the appreciation of Mount Katsuragi as a place where sinners fell into hell, and a place of Pure Bliss based on its topography:

濫觴夫以粟散の辺国無量なりといへども、日域をして  
 専時教流布の地とし、塵数の刹土無辺なりといへ

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 106-108.

ども、西方をして偏澆季相応の境とす。幸に生を受て釈尊善巧の要法にあへり。但うらむらくは、極悪すでに倒て、世人薄俗ともに急べからざるの事をあらそふ。ことごとく夢中の名利無常の根本なりと見えたり。故むなしく火坑欲入の機におちて、しばしば浄土広開の門に遠さかる。適習ひ聞ものは、信心疎にして又疑惑をいたく。出離の進退誰によりてさだめ、往生の証因何をもつてあきらめむ哉。爰に和州当麻寺において、中将姫といふ人、生身の色相を念せしが故に、化女の姿を現し、九十余駄の連茎の糸をもつて、一丈五尺の曼陀羅を織頭す。清是を見に、観経の所説に違はず、四辺階道をのつから囲澆し、九品の佛閣まことに歴然たり。まさに知べし、一度此場に詣せん輩は、忽に不退の土にいたると云事を、是則濁世の衆生の為に、易行をすすむる方便なり。如来深重の慈愍何事かこれにしかむ。ここをもつて、貴賤男女共に穢土を厭ひ、浄土を欣ばしめて、遍く同志を求めむがために、遠くそのを勸る。

Although it is said that there is no limit to the number of countries scattered like millet grain, it is [here in] the land of the rising sun where the [Buddhist] teachings circulate. One is fortunate to receive life and to encounter the essential teachings of the Buddha Sâkyamuni. However, unfortunately, [people] have already fallen into extreme evil and they compete over hurrying towards trivialities. For all, dreams of fame and wealth appear to be the foundation of transience. Due to this, vainly people fall into the burning hell of desire, and are repeatedly kept farther away from the wide-open gates to the Pure Land. Hearing the proper teachings, even [those of] little faith will lose their doubts. Based on whom does one decide one's conduct of renunciation, by means of what do [people] give up on the cause of birth in the Pure Land? Here, at Taima-dera in the province of Yamato, because a person by the name of Chūjōhime prayed to see [Amida]

in human form, a mysterious woman appeared, Buddha realm of the Nine Grades is truly distinct. One should know that people who made a pilgrimage to this place once immediately achieved birth in the Pure Land, that this doctrine [represented in the mandala] is intended for human beings of the corrupt world, and that it serves as an expedient means to provide an easy path of salvation. What if the benevolent compassion of the Buddha has indeed spread to this place? For this reason, men and women of both high and low ranks lose interest in the defiled world and joyfully begin to aspire to the Pure Land.<sup>19</sup>

Such characterizations of Mt. Katsuragi and Chūjōhime's story appear even more prominently in popular short stories (*otogizōshi*) and illustrated woodblock-printed books (*nara ehon*), which flourished from the Muromachi through the mid Edo period.

Therefore, it appears that real geographical places were crucial points of reference for medieval preachers and audiences. Preachers could not simply tell their story without some proof of physical reality of their tale. Texts and images played a part in this, but so did the landscape itself. The names of peaks and valleys corresponded to the topography of the legends. This aspect played a significant role regarding the undiminished popularity of the *Taima mandara* and its revival by means of *bukkyō setsuwa*, *otogizōshi*, and *nara ehon* in the Edo period. Of course, Taimadera's topography, being situated at the foot of the Nijo-Katsuragi Kongo Mountain range – worshipped by the locals as a gateway to hell and the Pure Land, drove these associations even further into peoples' imagination.

Another thread that connects the reflexive interplay between textual and visual configurations in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* and their significance for the transmission of knowledge is the *Taima mandara* itself. Peaking 960 meters above sea-level, Mount Katsuragi forms the center of both the Buddhist cosmos and Taima-dera's locale. This is evident in the *mukaekō*, a ritual

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 81-83.

which takes place annually on the fourteenth of May and reenacts the arrival of Amida and his host of bodhisattvas to welcome Chūjōhime to the Pure Land in honor of the creation of the *Taima mandara*. This ritual takes place in front of Taima-dera's main hall (*manadara-dō*) which houses the *Taima mandara* and is located in the western direction of the temple complex, symbolizing the direction of the celestial Pure Land from where Amida and his host will descent. Opposite the *manadara-dō* is a small hall (*shaba-dō*), which is located in the eastern direction of the temple complex and symbolizes the defiled world of human existence. During the *mukaekō* ritual, these two halls are connected by a wooden ramp (*raigōhashi*), which symbolically bridges the Pure Land and the human world. Upon the ringing of the temple bell, a small wooden figure, seated cross-legged on a lotus dais, is placed into a larger portrait sculpture of Chūjōhime and is carried from the *manadara-dō* to the *shaba-dō*. Then the ritual descent of Amida's heavenly host begins, and upon arrival at the *shaba-dō* the host carries the portrait sculpture of Chūjōhime back to the *manadara-dō* where a statue of Amida has been placed, symbolizing Amida welcoming the devotee to the Pure Land. At that time, the sun sets, enhancing the feeling of leaving the terrestrial world and entering the celestial world; this is the vision that devotees have looking at the *Taima mandara*.

The *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* organizes visual and textual expressions of place-making into a cosmological structure, characterizing the *Taima mandara* as a domain of its own which on the one hand, highlights the coherence and continuity of spaces; and, on the other hand, foregrounds the discontinuity between domains of spaces. In this sense, landscapes – both real and imaginary – like the “Ten Realms” depicted in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu*, are meaningful, socially constructed places. Therefore, the *Taima mandara* is both the verbal and pictorial representation of a narrative – the *Kanmuryōju-kyō* and Amida's Pure Land, respectively, as well as a representation of a locus – the two highest realms of enlightened existence in *jikkai-zu* and the locale of Taima-dera. Furthermore, the *Taima mandara* contains an element of the supernatural – leaving the defiled world and entering the celestial world, like the moment reenacted in the *mukaekō*. The moment of Amida welcoming the devotee to the



Pure Land fittingly describes the nature of the verbal narrative – the *shakkyō* and *waka* in the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu*, which have their origin in the *Ōjōyōshū*, the *Kanmuryōju-kyō*, and *chokusenshū* – becoming the “transformation text,” a medium driven by temporality, in this case the linear progression through the “Ten Realms,” ending with the authority of the *Taima mandara* as the highest realm. As for the “locus,” the *Taima-dera jikkai-zu byōbu* acts as a means of understanding the matrix of symbolic image and spatial topoi in the configuration of authority, identity, and memory associated with the *Taima mandara* in Edo-period Japan.

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