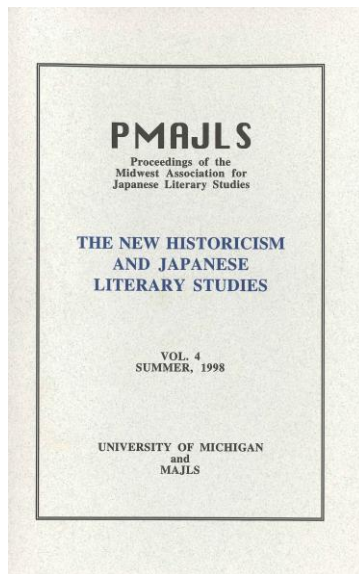


“*Meshūdo* and the System of Sexuality in *The Tale of Genji* and other Heian Texts”

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***Meshūdo* and the System of Sexuality in
The Tale of Genji and Other Heian Texts**

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I would like to discuss here the system of sexuality revolving around the word, "Meshūdo" or mistresses who were female attendants. Before we start to examine the word Meshūdo, we shall confirm several premises.

Under the regency during the Heian period (794-1184), marriage and sex were implicated in political power. I think it is strange that the man of power did not take over the reins of government, or the emperor directly, but rather made his daughter the wife of the emperor presupposing that she would bear the emperor's son. This was more important to the regent than the actual fact of his daughter becoming empress. In other words the regent gambled with Nature and reproduction. This is an interesting point when seen in the context of religion in ancient times.

Another strange fact is that, although marriage or sex was a means for gaining political power, it was also always related to the problem of one's affections. This situation was represented through love stories. We might recall that the first sexual narrative of male-female relations was described in *Kojiki* as bearing the land, but also that Izanagi and Izanami had to begin by declaring their affection as "Ana-ni-yasi, how good a lad!" "Ana-ni-yasi, how good a maiden!" for one another.

Example 1:

爾に伊邪那岐命詔りたまはく、「我が身は、成り成りて成り余れる処一処在り。故、此の吾が身の成り余れる処を以ちて、汝が身の成り合はざる処に刺し塞ぎて、国土を生み成さむと以為ふ。生むこと奈何」とのりたまへば、伊邪那美命、「然善けむ

」と答曰へたまひき。爾に伊邪那岐命詔りたまはく、「然らば吾と汝と是の天の御柱を行き廻り逢ひて、みとのまぐはひ為む」とのりたまひき。如此期りて、乃ち「汝は右より廻り逢へ。我は左より廻り逢はむ」と詔りたまひ、約り竟へて廻る時、伊邪那美命、先に「あなにやしえをとこを」と言ひ、後に伊邪那岐命、「あなにやしえをとめを」と言ひ、各言ひ竟へし後、其の妹に告げて曰りたまはく、「女人の先に言へるは良からず」とのりたまひき。(日本古典文学全集「古事記上代歌謡」小学館 1973, 53; emphases added: hereafter all emphases in quoted passages are mine.)

Then IZANAGI-NO-MIKOTO said:

"My body, formed through it be found, has one place which is formed to excess. Therefore, I would like to take that place in my body which is formed to excess and insert it into that place in your body which is formed insufficiently, and [thus] give birth to the land. How would this be?"

IZANAMI-NO-MIKOTO replied, saying:

"That will be good."

Then IZANAGI-NO-MIKOTO said:

"Then let us, you and me, walk in a circle around this heavenly pillar and meet and have conjugal intercourse."

After thus agreeing, [Izanagi-no-mikoto] then said:

"You walk around from the right, and I will walk around from the left and meet you."

After having agreed to this, they circled around; then IZANAMI-NO-MIKOTO said first:

"Ana-ni-yasi, how good a lad!"

Afterwards, IZANAGI-NO-MIKOTO said:

"Ana-ni-yasi, how good a maiden!"

After each had finished speaking, [Izanagi-no-mikoto] said to his spouse:

"It is not proper that the woman speak first."

(Philippi, Donald L. *Kojiki*, U of Tokyo P, 1968. Ch.4, 50-51)

In short, the private world of marriage and sexual relations was dominated by the public world of political and social values. And it is in this light that we must read the figure of the Meshūdo.

Now we are going to examine the word Meshūdo in several Heian texts. Next example is from *Eiga monogatari*. In this statement, Kaneie's Meshūdo called Tayū or Naishi no Suke is mentioned.

Example 2:

大殿年頃やもめにておはしませば、御召入の内侍のすけのおほえ、年月にそへてただ権北方にて、世中のみみやうぶし、さて司召の折はただこの局に集まり。院女御の御方に大輔といひし人なり。世の御はじめ頃、かうて一所おはします凶しき事なりとて、村上の先帝の御女三宮は、按察の御息所と聞えし御腹におとこ三宮・女三宮生れ給へりし、その女三宮を、この摂政殿心にくくめでたきものに思ひきこえさせ給て、通ひきこえさせ給ひしかど、すべてことのほかにて絶え奉らせ給ひにしかば、その宮もこれを恥しき事におほし歎きて失せ給にけり。それもこの内侍のすけの幸のいみじうありけるなるべし。

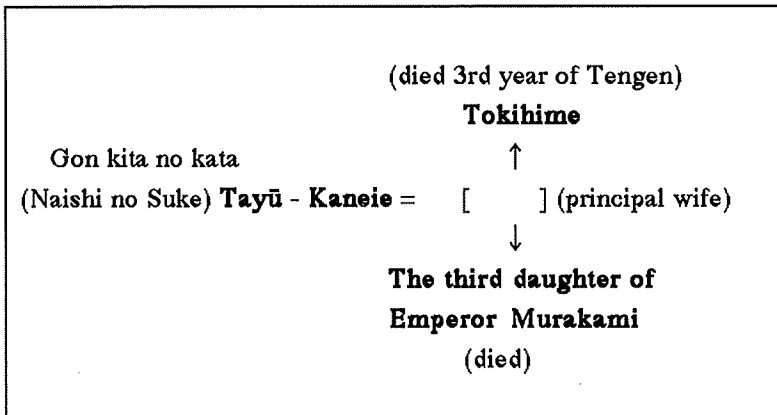
(「さまざまのよろこび」日本古典文学大系『栄花物語上』岩波書店 1964, 120)

Kaneie had already been a widower for a number of years. He was more devoted than ever to his concubine, Naishi no Suke, whose status had become scarcely distinguishable from that of a wife. People of all kinds presented her with name certificates, and everyone congregated in her apartments whenever there was to be a distribution of Court of wives. She was the lady who had served Choshi under the name Tayu.

At the beginning of Kaneie's regency, it had been pronounced inauspicious for him to remain single, and he had consequently married Princess Hoshi, Emperor Murakami's third daughter, whom he thought a charming and beautiful creature, (The Princess and the Emperor's third son, Prince Munehira, were the offspring of Arihira's daughter.) But she had failed to live up to expectations, and the marriage had soon ended, leaving her so ashamed that she had finally dies. The incident was perhaps merely another sign of Naishi no Suke's good Karma.

(McCullough, William H., and Helen Craig McCullough. "Joyous events", *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes*, Stanford University Press, 1980. Vol.1, 152)

To understand several characters associated with Kaneie, it is best to refer to several historical facts. Kaneie has a Seisai, or a principal wife, called Tokihime, and we can see her name in *Kageroju nikki*. She died in the 3rd year of Tengen (980).



According to *Eiga monogatari*, Kaneie was regarded as a widower at least in his social standing. The third daughter of Emperor Murakami assumed the position of Kaneie's principal wife upon his remarriage. There could be only one principal wife, the object of a formal marriage. But Kaneie was entirely devoted to Tayū, so the daughter of the Emperor died of shame. Even though Tayū surpassed the principal wife by gaining Kaneie's favor like this, and was called "Gon kita no kata" which may be translated as provisional principal wife, she could never be considered his principal wife socially.

Interestingly, even though Gon Kita no Kata was not officially the principal wife, many men who wanted to be promoted came to pay her compliments. According to Yoshikawa Shinji, one way for a man to gain promotion was to have an intimate relationship with the Nyōbō, or attendants of his superior. Using sexual relationships as a medium instead of

appealing directly to the superior was imitated by lower-rank officials as well.

According to this example, we may say that relations with Meshūdo were regarded as private affairs. In other words, Meshūdo can be considered outside the social system. By this I do not mean that there is no relation to the public, but rather that Meshūdo have the potential to forestall the position of the principal wife.

Next two examples are from *Utsuho monogatari*.

Example 3:

御方方へも渡り給はず、すべて、ことごと覚え給はねば、心も浮きたちて、先づ率て出でん所をおほしめぐらすに、一条に廣く大いなる殿に、さまざまなる大殿づくりかさねて、院の帝の女三の宮をはじめ奉りて、さるべき御子たち、上達部の御女、おほくの御めしうどまで、集め候はせ給ひければ「ここには、騒がしきなかに、迎へいでじ」とおほして、三条堀川の渡りに、又大きな殿、御娘の春宮にまかり給ふべき御料とおほして、年頃作り磨き、さまざまの御調度どもも、整へおき給へるに「そこに、むかへはいでん」とおほして、しつらひおきて、三日ばかり有りて、御供んい、かぎりなく睦じき限りノ人二人、われと御むまにのりて、

(「俊蔭」日本古典文学大系「宇津保物語一」岩波書店 1959,95)

From the day when he had visited their dwelling, General Kanemasa racked his brains all day long as to how to receive the mother and son into town. He had a grand residence along the First Avenue, where the Third Princess of the ex-Emperor Saga as well as a number of daughters of the princes and high courtiers were living as his wives and mistresses. He had another residence along the Third Avenue, which had been built with scrupulous care for the use of his daughter expected to attend upon the Crown Prince in future. He decided to accommodate the mother and son in this residence.

(Uraki, Ziro. ch.1, "Toshikage", "The Tale of the Cavern," Shinozaki shorin, Tokyo, 1984, 36)

Example 4:

一条殿は二丁なり。御門ハ二立リ。大殿宮、それにしたがひて西東の對、渡殿皆あり。寢殿は東の對かけて、宮住み給フ。他對どもに住メルは御子一人生メルトイタク時メカシ給ヘル人入對一宛ニゾ住ミケル。池おもしろく木立興あり。やうやう毀れもて行く。これを梨壺の君に父大殿の奉り給ヒけるなれば、宮ぞ主にて住み給フ。他人は上達部皇子達の御娘なれど、親も物し給はず、ただ大殿にかかり給へりしかば、今かかり給とて、日頃の家んなければ、え分れ給はぬ也ケル。召入めきたりし人人、あるはつぎつぎにしたがひてまかでのける。かかるに、大将東の一二の對、南の御殿の前より丹後の椽に御文持たせて宮の御方に参り給フ程に、方々立ち並みて見つつ、人人のいふやう「我が君を侘びさせ奉る盗人の族は、あたの戯れに戯れて、とほうの誦經文捧げ持ちて、惑ひ来るぞ」と集りて、或は手を摺りて立ち居拜む。或は萬のまがまがしき事いはぬなし。主どもは「あなかまや、かくめでたき子持たらむ人をば、いかがは疎かにはシ給はん。すべて宿世の盡きたればここそあらめ」とて、打ち泣き給フもあり、見めで給フもあり。

(「葦開中」日本古典文学大系『宇津保物語』岩波書店 1961, 390)

General Kanemasa had a grand residence, two hectares in area, along the First Avenue. The Third Princess was living in the main hall and the east wing, while several women formerly loves by Kanemasa were living in other wings. The residence had originally been built for the use of his daughter, Lady Nashitsubo, so her mother, the Third Princess, was now the head of the residence. The other women were all the daughters of princes or high courtiers, and one of them bore him a son. All these women were, however, discarded by Kanemasa after Nakatada's mother was received as his new wife. Having no parents to depend on and lonely life in this residence. There had formerly been many servants, who left the residence, however, one after another, until only a small number of persons remained there.

(Uraki, Ziro. ch.14, "Opening of the Warehouse: Part Two", "The Tale of the Cavern," Shinozaki shorin, Tokyo, 1984, 304)

Kanemasa has a large number of wives in residence at Ichijō. These women were abandoned since Kanemasa lived with

Toshikage no musume, or a daughter of Toshikage in the Sanjō residence.

The wives in Ichijō are distinguished according to their ranks. The third princess of the Emperor is at the top of the hierarchy, daughters of noblemen or Imperial heirs are in second place, and Meshūdo are in the last. Supposing we could give the name of "unofficial wife" to the ladies who are not either the principal wife or Meshūdo here, we could indicate the hierarchy as follows [a principal wife--unofficial wife--Meshūdo].

Their rank is determined by their father's social status. And it should be noted that Meshūdo's fathers are not mentioned at all. Women are also ranked according to whether or not they have children, and this is connected to patriarchal succession or inheritance. We can not see any discourse mentioning whether or not Meshūdo had children. Meshūdo are excluded by this standard of value.

The point to observe here is that a Meshūdo is strictly distinguished from a principal wife and also from other women who live in Inijo by social status and childbirth, which have highly political value.

I have indicated three levels of wives, but I must note that a Meshūdo is not on the same level with other wives, but rather put out of the competition in advance.

I might add that the difference between wives and Meshūdo is not concerned with whether they had a wedding ceremony or not in *Utsuho Monogatari*. It is written that Kanemasa did not have wedding ceremony with any women.

Here are examples from *The Tale of Genji*.

Example 5:

宮は、独りものしたまふやうなれど、人柄いといたうあだめいて、通ひたまふ所あまた聞こえ、召人とか、憎げなる名のりする人どもなむ、数あまた聞こゆる。さやうならむことは、憎げなうて見直いたまはむ人は、いとよなだらかにもて消ちて

む。すこし心に癖ありては、人に飽かれぬべき事なむ、おのづから出で来ぬべきを、その御心づかひなむあべき。

(「胡蝶」 日本古典文学全集 『源氏物語三』 小学館 1972, 172)

Prince Hotaru is a bachelor at the moment, but he is, I fear, a promiscuous sort, and the gossips associate him with innumerable women, some of whom are called ladies-in-waiting and others of whom go by less dignified names. A lady of tolerance and very great skill might possibly steer her way through, but the first sign of jealousy would be fatal. It is all in all a situation calling for tact and caution.

(Seidensticker, E.G. ch.25, "Butterflies", *The Tale of Genji*, Tuttle, 1978. Vol. 1, 425)

According to this statement, Prince Hotaru's Kita no Kata or principal wife died three years ago. He is regarded as single in public but he has many lovers. He goes out to meet his lovers and some of them called Meshūdo live with him inside his residence, since they are attendants. We may see again three different levels here [Kita no Kata--lovers living outside--Meshūdo living in his residence].

Now the place for the principal wife is blank, and Tamakazura is regarded as filling the blank. From this example, we may say that the Kita no Kata has political status, while other love affairs are regarded as private and not concerned with the public world.

Example 6:

御召人だちて、仕うまつり馴れたる木工の君、中將のおもとなどいふ人々に、ほどにつけつつ、安からずつらしと思ひきこえたるを、北の方はうつし心ものしたまふほどにて、いとناقしうち泣きてあたまへり。

(「真木柱」 日本古典文学全集 『源氏物語三』 小学館 1972, 351)

He permitted himself a tentative smile, which did not please her. Even those of her women whom he had especially favored, Moku and Chūjō among them, thought and said, with

proper deference, that he was behaving badly. The lady herself, whom he had found in one of her lucid moments, wept quietly.

(Seidensticker, E.G. ch.31, "The Cypress Pillar", *The Tale of Genji*, Tuttle, 1978. Vol. 1, 495)

In this statement, General Higekuro is reliable and a strait-laced in his relationships with women. He is contrasted with Prince Hotaru who is the source of much gossip. Higekuro does not have any lover outside, but he does have Meshūdo inside his residence and his Kita no Kata's residence. Hotaru is described as having many Meshūdo or lovers, while Higekuro's Meshūdo are specified by names as "Moku", "Chūjō", so his Meshūdo are probably a few in number.

General Higekuro's wife is a jealous woman. But the existence of Meshūdo is not a problem for her. Seen from this point of view, Meshūdo do not have children, are not concerned with the problem of jealousy, and do not have the status of wife.

It is not my purpose to check the word Meshūdo in literature against historical fact. It would be better to say that the narrative represents Meshūdo in a certain way.

In *The Tale of Genji*, although there are only two examples of the word "Meshūdo", there are many women who are in effect Meshūdo, especially in the Uji sequence.

It has been pointed out as a contradiction by scholars, that Kaoru has numerous minor affairs:

Example 7:

わが、かく、人にめでられんとなりたまへるありさまなれば、はかなくなげの言葉を散らしたまふあたりも、こよなくもて離るる心なくなびきやすなるほどに、おのづからなほざりの通ひ所もあまたになるを、人のためにことごとしくなだもてなさず、いとよく紛らはし、そこはかとなく情なからぬほどのなかなか心やましきを、思ひよれる人は、いざなはれつつ、三条宮に参り集まるはあまたあり。

(「匂宮」日本古典文学全集『源氏物語五』小学館 1975, 24)

Because he was so universally admired, ladies were not on the whole disposed to ignore his notes. Indeed, the response was usually immediate, and so he had in the course of time had numerous little affairs, all of them very fleeting. He always managed to seem interested but not fascinated. Perversely, any suggestion that he was not wholly indifferent had a most heady effect, and so his mother's Sanjō mansion swarmed with comely young serving women. His aloofness did not please them, of course, but the prospect of removing themselves from his presence was far worse. Numbers of ladies whom one would have thought too good for domestic service had come to put their trust in a rather improbable relationship. He was not very cooperative, perhaps, but there was no denying that he was a courteous gentleman of more than ordinary good looks. Ladies who had had a glimpse of him seemed to make careers of deceiving themselves.

It would be his first duty for so long as his royal mother lived, he often said, to be her servant and protector.

(Seidensticker, E.G. ch.42, "His Perfumed Highness", *The Tale of Genji*, Tuttle, 1978. Vol. 2, 741)

However, he was said to have abandoned his relationship with women:

Example 8:

帝後の御もてなしに、ただ人にては憚りなきめでたき人のおほえにてもものしたまへど、心の中には、身を思ひ知る方ありて、ものあはれになどもありければ、心にまかせてはやりかなるすき事をさをさ好まず、よろづの事もてしづめつつ、おのづからおよすけたる心ざまを人にも知られたまへり」

(「匂宮」日本古典文学全集『源氏物語五』小学館 1975, 23)

Kaoru was a different sort of young man. He already knew what an empty, purposeless world it is, and was reluctant to commit himself any more firmly than

seemed quite necessary. He did not want the final renunciation to be difficult. Some thought him rather ostentatiously enlightened in his disdain for amorous things, and it seemed wholly unlikely that he would ever urge himself upon a lady against her wishes. (Seidensticker, E.G. ch.42, "His Perfumed Highness", *The Tale of Genji*, Tuttle, 1978. Vol. 2, 740)

This contradiction is usually explained by saying that his affairs are only with Meshūdo, and the relationship with Meshūdo does not count as a real love affair. As we examined above, most of us would accept that Meshūdo are not equal to wives and that this relationship is a private matter, not a social one. When we designate some women who have affairs with Kaoru as Meshūdo, we might run the risk of leaving out of account many important aspects of Meshūdo.

Let us go back to the former example from "His Perfumed Highness" or "Niou no miya" [ex.7]. Kaoru's "Kayoi-dokoro" is not the room of female attendants inside his residence. (A similar example in [ex.5] telling about Prince Hotaru will come to mind.) Kaoru has many lovers outside, or Kayoi-dokoro, and many of them were invited by Kaoru to come to the Sanjō residence to be attendants. They were not attendants or Nyōbō by nature, but they are from a certain status of family socially, ranking with princesses of Uji.

Under the name of "Meshūdo", there was a tacit understanding that her standing was not to be made an issue.

In the Uji sequence, the hierarchy of status has been disrupted. A princess of Shikibukyō, even though she belongs to the Imperial family, comes to the Ichijō residence as an attendant after her father dies. This instability of status reflects the instability of Kaoru's rank. Although he has received special treatment by the Emperor, this is out of honor to Genji. Kaoru mentioned he is "tada-bito" or an ordinary man by himself. One

episode shows his rank is not so high socially:

Example 9:

天の下響きていつくしう見えつる御かしづきに、ただ人の具したてまつりたまふぞ、なほあかず心苦しく見ゆる。「さる御ゆるしはありながらも、ただ今、かく、急がせたまふまじきことぞかし」と、譏らはしげに思ひのたまふ人もありけれど、思したちぬること、さすがしくおはします御心にて、来し方の例なきまで同じくはもてなさん、と思しおきつるなめり。帝の御婿になる人は、昔も今も多かれど、かく、さかりの御世に、ただ人のやうに婿とり急がせたまへるたくひは少なくやありけん。

(「宿木」日本古典文学全集 『源氏物語五』 小学館 1975, 462)

Some complained. "Everyone has been talking about what a fuss he makes over her and now he gives her to a commoner! She must have expected something better. It would have been all right, perhaps, to give his august permission *eventually* -- but why did he have to rush things so?"

But the emperor, once he had made a decision, was a man to carry it out with alacrity. Provision would eventually have to be made for the princess, and he was prepared to go against precedent in making it now. Yet it must be said that though princesses are always marrying, few daughters of emperors so young and vigorous can have been rushed so precipitously into marriage with commoners.

(Seidensticker, E.G. ch.49, "The Ivy", *The Tale of Genji*, Tuttle, 1978. Vol. 2, 927)

He married the second daughter of the Emperor, but in the narrative, the verb "gusu" is used. "Gusu" came from the verb "attend" or noun "attendant". This usage treats him as if he was a servant of the princess. On the surface "tada bito" means that he is not from the Imperial family, but it also hints at the secrecy of his birth, namely, that he is a son of Kashiwagi. If he were born as a son of Kashiwagi, he could not have received such treatment. This thought makes him hesitate in having a relationship with women in public. He has a latent inferiority

complex because of his birth, and can not be free in his love affairs, especially when they imply a social relationship.

His inferiority complex makes it impossible for him to establish the conventional social hierarchy among his women, and every woman is put equally on the same line. Under this condition, the attendants of Kaoru suddenly jump into the foreground.

Example 10:

大将殿の、からうじていと忍びて語りひたまふ小宰相の君といふ人の、容貌などもきよげなり、心ばせある方の人と思されたり、同じ琴を掻き鳴らす爪音、撥音も人にはまさり、文を書き、ものうち言ひたるも、よしあるふしをなむ添へたりける。この宮も、年ごろ、いといたきものにしたまひて、例の、言ひやぶりたまへど、などか、さしもめづらしげなくはあらむ、と心強くねたきさまなるを、まめ人は、すこし人よりことなり、と思すになんありける。

(「蜻蛉」日本古典文学全集 『源氏物語六』 小学館 1976, 234)

Among them was one Kosaishō, famous for her elegance and grace, of whom Kaoru had with some difficulty made the secret acquaintance. He admired her for her artistic accomplishments. When she struck up a melody on koto or lute the sound was somehow different, and she had her own style too when she jotted down poem or granted an interview. Niou had not failed to make note of the name she was acquiring for herself, and once again he considered devices for thwarting his friend. Kosaishō had turned him coldly away. She was not among those who came running, she let it be known. Yes, thought Kaoru, she was unusual.

(Seidensticker, E.G. ch.52, "The Drake Fly", *The Tale of Genji*, Tuttle, 1978. Vol. 2, 1029)

According to this statement, one of Kaoru's Meshūdo, Kosaishō is a good looking woman, and is good at calligraphy and at playing the Koto, and she makes good sense when she says something. Prince Niou is attracted by her, but she won't accept

him. Kaoru admits her superiority from her attitude.

She sends a Waka, or a poem to Kaoru, calling herself "kazunaranu mi", or an insignificant person comparing herself to Ukifune after Ukifune disappears:

Example 11

あはれ知る心は人におくれねど数ならぬ身にきえつつぞふる
 (「蜻蛉」日本古典文学全集 『源氏物語六』 小学館 1976, 235)

Pray think me not less feeling than the others.

But I am no one. Silent pass my days.

(Seidensticker, E.G. ch.52, "The Drake Fly", *The Tale of Genji*, Tuttle, 1978. Vol. 2, 1029)

Kaoru compares these two women, and regards Kosaishō as superior to Ukifune. He thinks he would like to meet her not as an attendant but as a possible wife like Ukifune. And he also thinks that Ukifune would be suitable as an intimate attendant. In Kaoru's perception, these two women do not differ in their status value. Under this narrative condition, Meshūdo of Kaoru are described as attractive ladies.

We should notice that Kosaishō or another Meshūdo, Azechi are not called Meshūdo in the text, even though they are in fact Meshūdo. I would like to question why the narrative does not call them Meshūdo.

Scholars generally say that principal wives had good relationships with Meshūdo. But I can not accept the view that the Meshūdo does not feel jealousy and is satisfied with her position or affection of her patron.

One more mystery is that Meshūdo in the Heian texts do not have children, although the sexual relationships often result in children. Children raise the problem of inheritance, and Meshūdo might get a chance to assume a better status through this. Meshūdo potentially have the power to overcome the

principal wife and break out of the hierarchy of rank, so they are suppressed politically in the discourse. Meshūdo were eliminated from the political ranking, thus assuring the status of a principal wife. Meshūdo are forced to indulge in sexual relationships because they have the possibility to usurp and monopolize the sexual relations of their master. This would result in the elimination of the legitimate heir. Meshūdo are enclosed in the category of Meshūdo by naming them as such. This avoids upsetting the ranking relationships among women.

On the other hand, we admit that the relationship between master and Meshūdo is a sort of slavery, but we can not forget that it is narrated as a love affair. Meshūdo itself is self-contradictory, because the woman has a love affair with her master and she is a good servant for her master and even for his wife. Meshūdo are forced to have restricted love affairs and thus form a particular social and sexual arrangement in the larger system.

At the same time, we are restricted by the name of Meshūdo, and this results in a certain bias toward them. The word Meshūdo itself both reflects historical fact and actively constructs it. Just because jealousy toward Meshūdo is not described does not mean such a feeling did not exist, but rather that the narrative did not permit a description of it.

On these grounds I have come to the conclusion that *The Tale of Genji* escaped from these restrictions surrounding the word Meshūdo by often deliberately avoiding the use of the word in referring to attendants who have sexual relations with their master, and thus is able to make them the subject of full-fledged romantic narratives.

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