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Sex, Lies, and the Illustrated Scroll

The *Dōjōji Engi Emaki*

VIRGINIA SKORD WATERS

THE *Dōjōji* 道成寺 legend of a woman turned serpent, driven by passion to destroy a young monk hiding under the *Dōjōji* temple bell, is a remarkably durable theme in Japanese literary and graphic arts, retaining an almost uncanny hold upon the popular imagination over the last millennium. It has appeared in numerous versions and been adapted to a wide variety of genres and media, including Buddhist sermon, *noh*, *kabuki*, horror tale, and even contemporary novel.¹

The earliest accounts of the *Dōjōji* legend are found in *setsuwa* 説話 anthologies; the first appearance is in *Dai-Nihon Hokekyō Genki* 大日本法華經験記 (commonly known as *Hokke Genki*), c. 1040, followed by a similar formulation in *Konjaku Monogatari* 今昔物語, c. 1120,² and later, in *Genkō Shakusho* 元享釈書, 1332. All three of these early versions are bound to the thematic and rhetorical conventions of the *setsuwa* genre, a Buddhist tale collection that anthologized stories according to associative links, such that the primary hermeneutical thrust—almost invariably didactic—of a tale is dependent upon that of adjacent texts in the collection. For example, the *Konjaku Monogatari* version, titled ‘How a monk of *Dōjōji* in Kii province copied the Lotus Sutra and brought salvation to serpents’,³ is part of a group of some thirty tales extolling the miraculous powers of the Lotus Sutra. It is linked to the story immediately before it, ‘How a snake and a mouse were saved from their suffering through copying the Lotus Sutra’ through the motif of the snake achieving salvation—itself a carry-over from a prior tale—and the notion of interdependent karma; and to the following story, ‘A woman escapes her serpentine form and is reborn in heaven through the power of the Lotus Sutra’ by the

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¹ The novel is Nishiguchi Katsumi 西口克巳, *Dōjōji*, Nihon Shuppansha, 1988.

² For English-language translations, see Yoshiko Dykstra, tr., *Miraculous Tales of the Lotus Sutra*, University of Hawaii Press, 1983, pp. 145–46, and Marian Ury, tr., *Tales of Times Now Past*, University of California Press, 1979, pp. 92–96.

³ The translation of the title is Ury’s.

dual motifs of the female snake and sexual desire, inasmuch as the woman had been reborn as a serpent out of excessive regard for gold bestowed for a night of love-making.

The requirements of the *setsuwa* genre allow relatively little interpretive play to *setsuwa* versions of the Dōjōji legend, for the audience is bound to the hermeneutic expressed overtly in the text and covertly through the generic context of the Buddhist tale collection. The tale functions as a relatively conventional, if lurid, account of a lustful woman turned serpent and of the power of homage to the Lotus Sutra. Recast into the format of an illustrated scroll (*emaki* 絵巻), however, the Dōjōji legend emerges as an independent work in its own right, with a new dynamism and fascinating ambivalence. The present article will concentrate on the textual artifact of the *Dōjōji Engi Emaki* 道成寺縁起絵巻,⁴ a national treasure in the possession of Dōjōji, Tanabe-shi, Wakayama-ken, and the first expression of the Dōjōji legend in illustrated narrative scroll form.

The illustrated handscroll was often used in *etoki* 絵解 (literally, picture-explaining), a medieval performance art in which illustrations or an illustrated text was displayed to an audience as a raconteur (*etoki hōshi* 絵解法師) told the tale or explained the material, pointing to appropriate illustrations and adding interpretive commentary as necessary in order to maintain audience interest.⁵ Dōjōji maintains a long tradition of *etoki* centered on recitation of the Dōjōji tale; among the few *etoki* still performed in the present day is that by Dōjōji monks using a variant of the *Engi* produced early in the twentieth century. At the latest, the *Engi* can be dated to prior to 1573, when Ashikaga Yoshiaki 足利義昭 wrote his cipher to it. Yoshiaki visited Dōjōji in the Eleventh Month of that year and presumably viewed the scroll while listening to the priests' *etoki* recitation.⁶ Legend attributes the scroll's calligraphy to Emperor Go-Komatsu 後小松, r. 1382–1392, but recent analysis of the writing style suggests dating the scroll to some time in the fifteenth century.⁷

⁴ A complete black-and-white photographic reproduction of this two-scroll set may be found in Umezu Jirō 梅津次郎 & Okami Masao 岡見正雄, ed., *Nihon Emakimono Zenshū* 日本絵巻物全集, Kadokawa, 1979, 18, or in Komatsu Shigemi 小松茂美, ed., *Zoku Nihon Emaki Taisei* 続日本絵巻大成, Chūō Kōronsha, 1982, 13. My translation of the text is based on transcriptions in Yokoyama Shigeru 横山重 & Matsumoto Ryūshin 松本隆信, ed., *Muromachi Jidai Monogatari Taisei* 室町時代物語大成, Kadokawa, 1982, 10, and in Sōga Tetsuo 相賀徹夫, ed., *Dōjōji*, Shōgakukan, 1982.

⁵ For a discussion of these and other medieval performers, see Barbara Ruch, 'Medieval Jongleurs and the Making of a National Literature', in John W. Hall & Takeshi Toyoda, ed., *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, University of California Press, 1977, pp. 279–309.

⁶ A note next to the cipher reads: 'This is the cipher of His Lordship, 15th day, Eleventh Month, Tenshō 1 [1573]. While staying at Kyōkokuji, he espied from afar the site [*engi gosho*] of this tale, and came to view this scroll.'

⁷ The poet Shōtetsu 正徹, 1381–1459, has also been suggested as the calligrapher. The style is *chokuhitsuryū* 勅筆流—imperial autograph style—used by both men. Shimatani Hiroyuki 島谷弘幸, '*Dōjōji Engi no Kotobagaki o Megutte* 道成寺縁起の詞書をめぐって', in *Zoku Nihon Emaki Taisei*, 13, pp. 183–85.

The title *Dōjōji Engi Emaki* is somewhat misleading. As a genre, the *engi* commonly tells of the founding of a temple or shrine, usually in conjunction with a miraculous event that justifies the eminence of the institution. But the legend that might be said to comprise the original *Dōjōji Engi* does not appear in earlier *setsuwa* versions and in the *Engi* is condensed to: ‘Dōjōji in Hidaka was founded under the administration of Michinari 道成, Minister of Kii, by imperial decree of the Mommu 文武 emperor. It is the sacred site of the first manifestation in our land of the bodhisattva Senju Sengen Kannon 千手千眼観音.’ As recounted in several old texts, the noh play *Kanemaki* 鐘巻, and in a modern reading of the legend performed by priests at Dōjōji, the legend tells of a young local female diver named Miyako 宮子, who recovered from the water a Buddhist image now enshrined at Dōjōji. Through the benefit of this image, she attracted the attention of the Mommu emperor, by whom she later bore the future Emperor Shōmu 聖武. Michinari, minister of the province, was commissioned by the Mommu emperor to build Dōjōji in order to enshrine the image, and the temple’s name is derived from the sinicized reading of ‘Michinari’.⁸

The immediate and practical function of the *Engi* reference to this legend may have been to serve as a cue for *etoki* performers to launch into an oral recitation of the *engi*, should time considerations and audience interest prove amenable to such a digression. On a more affective level, however, those familiar with the legend would hear echoes of the foundation legend in the plot of the *Engi*. As Susan Klein points out, females diving into water are central to the Dōjōji legend; the dancer of the noh play *Kanemaki* can be seen as ‘a reincarnation/manifestation of both the serpent woman and the diver.’⁹ The nineteenth-century *Dōjōji Miyakohime Denki Emaki* 道成寺宮子姫伝記絵巻, also in Dōjōji’s collection, depicts Miyako diving into the depths, her hair winding in a long, twisted pattern resembling a serpent.¹⁰

Unlike the monoscenic handscroll, in which the text alternates with scenes directly correlating to it, the *Engi* is a continuously narrated handscroll, characterized by scenes that unfold sequentially, with the text generally appearing in blocks at the beginning and end.¹¹ The *Engi* opens with a large, dense,

⁸ Like most temple *engi*, the historical accuracy of this account is questionable. A woman named Miyako, d. 754, was indeed consort to the Mommu emperor and mother of Shōmu, but records give her a far more elevated lineage. But Umehara Takeshi, exploring early legends linking Dōjōji to the Mommu emperor, suggests that indeed as late as 1359 Dōjōji was recognized as a *chokuganji* 勅願寺, built by imperial commission early in the eighth century, lending credence at least to the latter part of the *engi* legend. Later, when the temple lost Fujiwara patronage early in the tenth century, it turned for support to the Tendai and Kumano cults. Umehara Takeshi 梅原猛, *Ama to Tennō: Nihon to wa Nani ka* 海人と天皇: 日本とは何か, Asahi Shimbunsha, 1991, 2, p. 293. Umehara devotes five full chapters to an investigation of the historical authenticity of the Dōjōji legend.

⁹ Susan Blakely Klein, ‘When the Moon Strikes the Bell: Desire and Enlightenment in the Noh Play *Dōjōji*’, in JJS 17:2 (1991), p. 309.

¹⁰ Umehara, pp. 259 & 268.

¹¹ Okudaira Hideo, *Narrative Picture Scrolls*, Weatherhill & Shibundō, 1973, pp. 64–66.

authoritative block of script that designates the time, place, actors, and background of the events to be related. Mori Masato calls this portion the *shishō* 詞章, or *monogatari* 物語: a mediated report on the reality presumed to lie behind the story, existing independently of the illustrations and objectifying core material through the act of telling.¹² It rings with the authoritative tones of *setsuwa*-style narration, alerting the audience that the tale is to be received as a wholly reliable account, its authenticity derived from Buddhist epistemology as revealed through human history. Indeed, the opening and conclusion of the text are almost a direct *wabun* 和文 adaptation of the *kambun kundoku* 漢文訓読 style of *Hokke Genki*,¹³ framing the story by overt narratorial discourse and thereby neatly enclosing the illustrative contents, which, as we shall see, might otherwise be too potentially subversive for elementary Buddhist didactic purposes. Consideration of the performative context reveals a potential identification of this *setsuwa*-style narration with the *etoki hōshi* himself, a male cleric representing the temple and the hegemonic written discourse of Buddhist authority.

In contrast to the measured, uniform, and literate tone of the opening *monogatari*, the illustrated portion of the *Engi* features lines of speech inscribed into the illustrations, much in the manner of modern cartoons.¹⁴ The simple setting, clumsy perspective, vernacular rendering of the characters' speech, and the casual manner in which character and speech are presented evoke a sense of spontaneity and artlessness. In several places in the *Engi*, *monogatari* text is inserted between illustrations, indicating that the pictures were prepared in anticipation of text to be inserted later. Text and captions, then, are dependent upon the illustrations, rather than the other way around, rendering the verbal discourse illustration-driven.¹⁵

This combination of illustration and direct speech is graphic, direct, and physically active. Here Mori identifies two voices: *serifu* 科白, the lines of speech uttered by the characters themselves, and *etoki*, the voice of the picture explainer. In actual *etoki* performance, of course, the *etoki hōshi* narrates the entire story, reporting (and often altering) the text of the initial narrator, and so might be called the real, physically manifest narrator. Within the illustrations, however, *serifu* are presumed by the audience to be direct, unmediated representations of the character's actual speech; *etoki* lines, on the other hand,

¹² Mori Masato 森正人, 'Serifu to Etoki to Monogatari: Dōjōji Engi Emaki o Megutte' 科白と絵解と物語:道成寺縁起絵巻をめぐる, in *Bungaku* 文学, 52:4 (1984), pp. 29–32.

¹³ Uchida Kentoku 内田賢徳, 'Dōjōji Engi Ekotoba no Seiritsu' 道成寺縁起絵詞の成立, in *Nihon Emaki Taisei*, 13, pp. 160–62.

¹⁴ This technique is seen in the late-twelfth-century *Hiko Hoho Demi no Mikoto Emaki* 彦火々出見尊絵巻, and with more frequency in later Muromachi-period *emaki*, such as the *Zenkyōbō Ekotoba* 善教房絵詞 or *Fukutomi Zōshi* 福富草紙. See Shimatani, pp. 180–81.

¹⁵ Yoshiaki Shimizu has observed a similar phenomenon in the *Hiko Hoho Demi no Mikoto* scroll. See his 'Some Elementary Problems of the Japanese Narrative, *Hiko-hoho-demi no Mikoto*', in *Studia Artium Orientalis et Occidentalis*, Osaka, 1982, 1, pp 29–41.

cannot be assigned to characters within the narrative, and therefore mediate between illustration and audience.¹⁶ The illustrations themselves comprise yet a third voice, speaking directly to the viewer in unmediated representation. Together, these three voices create a rich, multi-valenced narrative presentation that denies univocal authority, creating a heightened sense of realism, magnification of the human dimension of experience, and a new formulation of the Dōjōji narrative.

The junction of these two verbal modes—*monogatari* and the various voices embedded in the illustrations—may be projected upon the very topography of the area and the *emaki* itself. The *monogatari* breaks off into the first sequence of illustrations set at the woman's home in Manago. Poised at the boundary between the populated alluvial plain and the mountainous sacred realm of Kumano, Manago is almost midpoint between the two sites of prime importance in the story: the Kumano shrine complex, to which the monk is initially bound, and Dōjōji, where he later meets his end. From the tenth century, the Kumano pilgrimage route began to attract an increasing number of devotees, beginning with the imperial progression by Retired Emperor Uda 宇多 in 907, later followed by that of Emperor Kazan 花山, and frequent progressions by subsequent emperors—over thirty undertaken by Go-Shirakawa 後白河. By early medieval times, the route was traversed by a steady stream of the devout: aristocrats, ascetics, and commoners both male and female. Dōjōji is located along a traditional pilgrimage route, which followed the coast and then turned inland shortly after passing the temple. It is likely that many of the audience of the contemporaneous Dōjōji *etoki* performance were themselves en route to or from Kumano, and as such, would tend to identify with the hapless young monk of the tale.

Sexual abstinence for the duration of the journey was an integral part of the many austerities practiced by Kumano pilgrims. In emphasizing this dimension of the Dōjōji legend, Gorai Shigeru cites a tale in the *Shasekishū* 沙石集 *setsuwa* collection in which a priest-pilgrim to Kumano violates this prohibition and dies.¹⁷

There was once a lady on pilgrimage to Kumano. The priest who was her guide took a fancy to her and was most avid in his addresses. She was unable to discourage him, and mollified him by agreeing to meet on the following night. That evening, prior to the one meeting she had granted to his persistent requests, she sat brooding, unable to eat. Her faithful maid, observing that her mistress was out of sorts, asked what was troubling her, and the lady poured out her story.

‘Although I have long cherished the desire to make this pilgrimage, this matter has arisen, and so I can eat nothing.’ The maid replied, ‘I shall go. Since it is night, no one will know the difference. Send me in your stead.’ Together they

¹⁶ Mori, pp. 30–32.

¹⁷ Gorai Shigeru 五来重, ‘Dōjōji Engi Emaki no Shūkyōsei’ 道成寺縁起絵巻の宗教性, in *Emaki*, vol. 27 of *Shinshū Nihon Emakimono Zenshū*, November, 1979, p. 15.

wept. 'We are maid and mistress as a result of a former karmic vow. You must not regret my action,' insisted the maid.

That night, the maid met with the priest, and the priest was turned to gold, but she was unharmed. (In Kumano, death is referred to as 'turning to gold'.) When people found out about it, for there was no way to cover up the matter, no one blamed the maid. Everyone agreed that she had had no choice but to meet with the priest, and was therefore innocent.

This accords with the statutes: had she acted out of lust, she also would have turned to gold. As it was, she had offered her life for that of her mistress, not because she loved the priest. She is blameless according to the law.¹⁸

If violation of ritual purity by indulgence in sexual relations while on pilgrimage was believed to result in death, medieval audiences would have interpreted the *Engi* monk's postponement of the assignation as an understandable act of self-preservation, regardless of whether or not he was initially attracted to the woman.

In keeping with this notion, *setsuwa* versions of the Dōjōji tale assign relatively little sexual interest or culpability to the monk, depicting the woman as evil, lascivious, and furious when rejected.¹⁹ *Hokke Genki* describes the monk as 'greatly surprised and frightened' at the woman's 'embracing, pestering, and flirting with him all night long';²⁰ the *Konjaku Monogatari* version uses almost identical wording. In *Genkō Shakusho*, the monk is identified by name, Anchin 安珍, while the woman is left nameless.²¹ 'Suspicious of her attentions', Anchin admonishes her gently, but she remains adamant in her sexual desire for him. Neither these *setsuwa* nor the *Engi* state explicitly that the monk deliberately lies, suggesting instead that his promise to return to her after his pilgrimage was a desperate attempt to escape an evil woman.

The *monogatari* narration of the *Engi*, however, is more even-handed than the *setsuwa*, describing the woman as a daughter-in-law of the householder, thus indicating relative youth and perhaps implying that she might possess attractions sufficient to engage the monk's interest. In addition, the *Engi* downplays the monk's discomfiture at her advances, so prominent in the *setsuwa*, and directly reports the woman's argument, adding to its persuasive potential. Her use of the familiar medieval aphorism, 'Those sharing the shade of a tree or the waters of a stream are all connected from former lives,' expressing the Buddhist principle of co-dependent karma (*kechien* 結縁), justifies the in-

¹⁸ *Shasekishū* 沙石集, 1:8, *kohon* textual variation, in *Shasekishū*, NKBT 84, Iwanami, 1966, p. 466. Texts containing this account date to the early Edo period; *Shasekishū* dates to 1279–1283.

¹⁹ All three *setsuwa* texts designate her as *yamome* 寡婦, referring to a single woman, either never married or widowed. Translations by Dykstra and Ury render her a widow; given the emphasis on her sexual appetite, this is probably what the texts intended.

²⁰ In *Sōga*, p. 332.

²¹ The woman acquires the name Kiyohime 清姫 in *Kengaku no Sōshi* 賢学の草紙, a later Muromachi variant of the legend. Kiyohime is probably derived from the Japanese reading of Seiji, after the Steward of Seiji 清次, the householder designated in the *Engi* account.

evitability of their relationship. Here, the phrase may be interpreted either narrowly as a rhetorical means employed to achieve her amorous end or, more broadly, as a foreshadowing of their eventual linked destinies. Even so, while the *monogatari* narration of the *Engi* tones down the episode from the extreme terms of the *setsuwa*, it still conforms to the *setsuwa* portrait of an evil trollop bent on ensnaring a pure and devout monk. The succeeding discourse carried by the illustrations and direct speech, however, sheds a different light on relations between the two characters.

Principles of Inversion

Because the handscroll is viewed by continuously unrolling from the left and rerolling to the right, developments, new material, and characters' movement in the unfolding (unrolling) story must be revealed from the left. So too in the *Engi*, the characters' progression toward Dōjōji necessarily is directed to the left as the scroll is unrolled, and movement toward Kumano, directed to the right, where the scroll is rewound. Thus, the inherent physical format of the handscroll itself thrusts movement toward Dōjōji, the reverse of the pilgrimage route to Kumano, establishing a tension between the sacred site of Kumano to the left and Dōjōji to the right, and developing soteriological tensions through topographical representation. This phenomenon derived from the physical format of the scroll medium is one of many manifestations of a strong tendency toward inversion—spatial, directional, gender, and soteriological—inversion that characterizes the *Engi* as a whole.

The first illustration that the viewer encounters reverses the sequence of events already related in the *monogatari* text. Here we see the woman bidding the monk off to Kumano. Both characters are oriented to the right, presumably toward Kumano, but more immediately toward the introductory *monogatari* block of script. This illustration is followed to the left by a scene of the attempted seduction, and still further left, by that of the woman and monk, which is usually interpreted as the monk begging for lodgings. In order to impose narrative order upon the sequence, the audience is required to begin with the third scene and move to the right, then to jump to the fourth scene to begin the conventional leftward scan.²²

Inscribed in the first illustration that the audience encounters, directly to the left of the point at which the *monogatari* narration breaks off, is the monk's *serifu*, 'Why should I deceive you? I'll return as soon as I can.' By phrasing his response as a rhetorical question, he engages in an artful dodge—not quite a blatant lie, but certainly a deliberate attempt to mislead. He departs to the right, seemingly into the block of *monogatari* script, which we are to interpret

²² Modern *etoki* performances using recent copies of the same scroll adhere to this order, although Mori, p. 36, believes that the discrepancy is the result of miscopying, and says that the seeming inversion can be righted by 'reading' the illustrations while ignoring the lines of speech.

as the direction of Kumano. The audience cannot follow him further, but must wait with the woman for him to return. She is barefoot, indicating her intention to wait patiently at home. By this inversion, the first illustration that the audience sees, but the third in the inverted narrative sequence, the graphic text emphasizes the leave-taking, creating audience empathy with the woman's anticipation of reunion. Moving to the left, the second, middle scene depicts the two in leisurely poses inside the woman's home, seated upright and fully clothed. The woman's expression is indistinguishable, but certainly not exaggerated in anger or lust, while the monk is smiling as if much enjoying the interlude; their poetic exchange is inscribed adjacent to their figures.

The third illustration to the left depicting the couple's initial encounter conspicuously lacks speech lines, as if to allow free interpretation as to the nature of that encounter. The monk is flanked by sturdy pines; the woman, by a graceful flowering tree that echoes the lines and color of her robe. Thus the illustrations of the meeting and interaction reflect contemporaneous conventions of presenting a lyric idyll of two lovers, with the effect of rendering the monk far more perfidious. Rather than a last resort of extreme desperation, his promise to return becomes a premeditated evasion following a casual dalliance. His fate, then, is as much a consequence of the woman's justifiable anger at his deception as of her own frustrated sexual desire. This readjustment in culpability has important ramifications for the Dōjōji narrative of the *Engi*, for audience reception of the remainder of the tale will be significantly affected by rendering the woman as a far more sympathetic character.²³

Illustrative Expansions

When the monk bypasses Manago on his return journey, the *monogatari* narration of the *Engi* follows the *setsuwa* in condensing the woman's reaction to a sudden fit of uncontrollable rage. Its illustrative counterpart, on the other hand, expands upon the events, depicting a gradual sequential mounting of frustration that finally turns to fury. First, her head demurely covered, the woman politely addresses the leader of a pilgrim group, but receives in response two unreliable reports from passers-by. Still walking, and in relative possession of her faculties, she addresses the leader once again. She finally receives a laconic and abrupt reply, and her anger is aroused. The passers-by are never depicted addressing the woman directly, but rather appear to speak only to each other in a closed, self-referential circle that graphically excludes her. Like the monk who has preceded them, they also are pilgrims, intent upon a religious goal lying in the opposite direction. As if to underscore this notion,

²³ Later formulations of the Dōjōji legend tend to stress the woman's innocence and the monk's treachery. The *katari* account in the noh *Dōjōji* expands upon the notion of the male householder and turns the woman into a young girl, misled by her father into believing that the monk is destined to marry her. In *Kengaku no Sōshi*, she is an innocent victim of the monk's desperate attempt to avoid the gods' decree that the two be wed.

the leader's response itself is not rendered in caption, but is abruptly inserted by the overt narrator of the *monogatari*, the voice of authority and religious orthodoxy.

The illustration is strangely reticent in distinguishing the leader (*sendatsu* 先達) of the group: the first pilgrim, garbed in the *yuigesa* 結袈裟 of the yamabushi ascetic, responds differently from what is reported by the narrator, while the next likely candidate, an older man dressed as a yamabushi, is busy gawking, pointing out the woman to a female pilgrim. Indeed, as with the Kumano complex, the leader may not actually be depicted at all, making the figure of religious authority as evasive to us as is the monk whom the woman so desires.

The remainder of the first scroll is given over to the chase, the measured *monogatari* of the overt narrator seemingly retreating in the face of the woman's wrath. As she pursues the monk, she is gradually transformed into a large, terrifying serpent. This transformation represents a major change from the *setsuwa* versions, which tersely report that the woman, spurned and betrayed by the monk whom she loves, retires to her room, later to emerge as a large serpent. In the *Engi*, the transformation makes up almost all the action of the first scroll, beginning with the first verbal and graphic expression of the woman's distress and culminating with her crossing the Hidaka River as a large serpent. Umezu Jirō posits that it was this structural change in the Dōjōji legend that allowed its expression in the *emaki* format,²⁴ but it is equally possible that this change was made precisely to allow graphic expression in the *emaki*. By drawing out the process and making full use of the graphic possibilities inherent to the Dōjōji legend, the *Engi* scroll becomes highly theatrical, maximizing its effect in *etoki* performance.

The *emaki* format is ideally suited to the depiction of sequential transformation, rendering change over time and space through devices known as *iji dōzu* 異時同図 (different time, same illustration) and *hanpuku byōsha* 反復描写 (repetition picture with different background, but same characters). The first three scenes depicting the monk and woman in essentially the same location at different times are characteristic of the former; the chase scenes, with their ever-changing background, of the latter. Normally, scenes in *hanpuku byōsha* sequence are differentiated by the insertion of scenery or some other feature that establishes a boundary between frames. In the *Engi*, the scenes are minimally differentiated, creating a strong sense of continuity and progression. This unusually close, almost seamless, sequencing of the illustrations often leads the viewer to take in two images in one glance. Indeed, two sequences in the pursuit are not differentiated at all, creating the appearance that each character is chasing the other, and reinforcing the linkage between the monk and the woman: caught in a web of karma, they figuratively chase each other in an endless circle of desire.

²⁴ Umezu Jirō, 'Dōjōji Kaisetsu' 道成寺解説, in *Nihon Emakimono Zenshū*, 18, p. 20.

The close sequencing also leads to an effect whereby a single image functions as a temporal pivot—a graphic equivalent of the verbal *kakekotoba* 掛詞—which collapses time and space into a single continuum. Because these graphic pivots may confuse the viewer, they occur only where the text steps in to clearly establish narrative order. In illustration 4, still looking relatively serene, the woman addresses a pilgrim to her immediate left; he, on the other hand, looks forward to the left, commenting on her disheveled state as she next appears further to the left. In the last illustration of the first scroll, a ferryman sits with the monk to his right, the woman's discarded robe between the monk and the ferryman. The woman, now turned serpent, is fording the river to the left. Reading the illustration sequentially, we see the monk approaching the ferryman, who sits waiting to take him across the river; then, in the next illustration, the same image of the ferryman pivots, now appearing to the right of the serpent-woman fording the river, refusing her passage and thereby forcing her to complete her quest—and her transformation—by swimming across herself.

Doubling and Repetition

The graphic pivot device is only one of many instances of doubling back and repetition in the *Engi*. Several earlier scenes double back to nearly repeat material already given. This first occurs when the woman repeats her request to the group leader, and again, following illustration 4, when the text recapitulates, with slight variation, the leader's response and her reaction, already narrated in the *monogatari* text. Her *serifu* of illustration 6 is substantially the same as that of illustration 5, although the passers-by are, of course, different characters. In the picture, her robe slips off her head, hanging loosely off her shoulders, and one sandal is kicked off as she begins to run, making a stark contrast with the devout, demure Kumano-bound female pilgrim on horseback.

How maddening this is! Every moment that I'm unable to get my hands on that low-down priest, my heart knows no rest. In normal circumstances, the shame of all this would be mortifying to me. But now, let my sandals and my scandals fall where they may [*uranashi mo omotenashi mo usemu kata e useyo*].

The lines play on *uranashi* 裏なし (a kind of heel-less sandal) and *omotenashi* 面なし (lack of face; demeanor, reputation), by juxtaposing *ura* (back) and *omote* (front): neither her sandals nor loss of face, neither her back (past) nor her front (future) is a matter of concern. As a verbal trope, a pun itself requires a double reading.

The constant motion represented by the chase, as well as the repetition and doubling back of the verbal and the graphic text, suggests the ebb and flow of the pilgrimage route. Just as the dangers posed by lustful women constitute a strong theme in the *setsuwa* Dōjōji tales, travel and transformation over the pilgrimage route provide a strong theme in the first scroll of the *Engi*. The procession depicted in the *Engi* merges the spiritual with the mundane in emphasizing the human dimension of the pilgrimage experience. Overall, the

Engi scroll is marked by a relatively larger scale of human figures proportionate to the *emaki* frame than was customary.²⁵ The pilgrims, depicted in the earthy, almost caricature-like style typical of *emaki* representations of commoners, are a diverse group, including two women garbed in *mushinotareginu* 袈の垂れ衣, porters, and attendants. In a comic inversion of the woman's attempted seduction of the monk, a pilgrim offers to share his provisions with a comely female, who coyly accepts. Another complains of the leggings that are part of the prescribed pilgrimage garb, but nonetheless dutifully relaces them.

The first scroll of the *Engi* conforms to a geographic frame of reference recognizable to any contemporaneous pilgrim. After the chase begins at the woman's home in Manago, the first landmark to appear is the Kirime River, identified obliquely through the *serifu* adjacent to the illustration of the woman crossing the river.

[woman] Oh, how maddening! What shall I do? Soon enough I shall discard this body and dissolve my life in the Kirime River. My tearful laments would lead me to drown myself, but I cannot summon the strength.

Immediately to the left of the river is a depiction of the Kirime Gotai Ōji 切目五体王子, one of the five most important of the ninety-nine shrines on the Kumano pilgrimage route, accompanied by the *etoki* line identifying it. Next, inscribed between the woman's and monk's *serifu*, is the *etoki* phrase, 'This is the place called Ueno.' We must take this on faith, for the words dangle in mid-air without any graphic referent. The catalog (*monozukushi* 物尽) of place names proceeds to a salt-burner's hut at Shioya (also accompanied by an *etoki* tag line) and ends with the Iwauchi Ōji 岩内王子, which once stood on the Kumano side of the Hidaka River, thus covering about fifty kilometers of actual distance. These common landmarks served as guideposts for the Kumano-bound pilgrim, acting as tangible signs of increasing proximity to the geographic and spiritual goal of Kumano. In the *Engi*, they mark the increasing distance of pursued and pursuer from Kumano, expressing the spatial dimension of the woman's gradual transformation and spiritual degeneration.²⁶

Travel and Transformation

The first scroll of the *Engi* evinces a strong motif of feet and footwear; indeed, footwear becomes the metaphoric expression of the pilgrimage itself and, by extension, of the spiritual quest. Throughout the first scroll, the woman is the only character depicted with bare feet. We have already noted her conspicuously bare feet in the leave-taking scene, which can be interpreted retrospectively as a foreshadowing of her eventual serpentine transformation and leap into the

²⁵ Shimatani, p. 180.

²⁶ Yoshida Tomoyuki 吉田友之, 'Dōjōji Engi no Hyōgen' 道成寺縁起の表現, in *Zoku Nihon Emaki Taisei*, 13, p. 176.

Hidaka River. As her transformation begins, she makes two overt references to discarding her sandals. A serpent, of course, has no feet, and no need for shoes. Giving herself over to lust and revenge, she sheds the trappings of human culture and rejects salvation through conventional means. The pilgrim attending to his leggings reinforces the *Engi*'s identification of footwear with devotion and bare feet with the profane. The woman's quest may be seen as anti-pilgrimage, the inverse of that taken by the Kumano pilgrims. While the actual route would have been crowded with travelers on their way both to and from Kumano, in the *Engi* the pilgrims are headed only toward Kumano; the only figures headed counter to this flow, toward the left, are the woman and monk. Interestingly, just as the woman discards her sandals and headcovering, so too the monk casts off the religious appurtenances encumbering his movement.

The entire Kumano region, long regarded as sacred space, was felt to reverberate with spiritual significance. Progress toward a sacred locale was an integral part of the pilgrimage experience, 'an exercise in rebirth and magical transformation'.²⁷ To follow the pilgrimage route, then, was to undergo a necessary process of spiritual progression and transformation. As a chart of the process of travel and transformation, the first scroll of the *Engi* may be seen as a kind of *michiyuki* 道行, 'a literary technique for capturing the process of death and rebirth in the imagery of space'.²⁸ But this is a *michiyuki* traced in reverse: a movement away from a sacred place, a flight motivated by fear on the one hand and loathing on the other, headed toward death and retribution.

According to the Buddhist principle of *gyakuen* 逆縁, often invoked in medieval Japanese epistemology, good and evil are interdependent, such that even a conscious turning away from Buddhist law may lead a person toward it. Anti-pilgrimage is pilgrimage nonetheless, and at the end of the pilgrimage route lies salvation.²⁹ Gunji Masakatsu has remarked that the name Dōjōji, literally, 'Temple of the becoming path', might be interpreted in light of its geographical position at the beginning of the Kumano pilgrimage route.³⁰ The nature of the woman's anti-pilgrimage, however, also suggests the path she traces toward extreme spiritual degeneration and ultimate enlightenment that is realized at Dōjōji.

As the chase approaches the temple, the atmosphere becomes forbidding and the landscape increasingly dotted with pines that, because of their scaley

²⁷ Allan G. Grapard, 'Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Toward a Definition of Sacred Space in Japanese Religions', in *History of Religions*, 21:1 (1981), p. 206.

²⁸ Nakanishi Susumu, 'The Spatial Structure of Japanese Myth: The Contact Point Between Life and Death', in Earl Miner, ed., *Principles of Classical Japanese Literature*, Princeton U.P., 1985, p. 124.

²⁹ In this light, the image of the woman kicking off her sandal is particularly provocative for its potential association with legends that the historical Buddha shed his footwear upon leaving his palace to commence his quest for enlightenment.

³⁰ Gunji Masakatsu 郡司正勝, 'Dōjōji no Sekai' 道成寺の世界, in Sōga, p. 19.

bark, suggest in East Asian tradition the scales of serpents. The transformation is complete with the crossing at the Hidaka River, where, refused passage by boat, the woman turns into a serpent and swims across. The river, both location and catalyst of her ultimate transformation, defines the illustrative border between the first and second scroll. Crossing the stream, of course, is also a Buddhist metaphor for salvation. Here, the woman's now fully serpentine form represents the final stage of her inverted Buddhist quest as an incarnation of desire. As we shall see, however, this is a necessary precondition for her ultimate salvation and transformation into a heavenly being.

In marked contrast to the open topography of the Kumano side expressed in the first scroll, the action of the second takes place in the bound, static Buddhist space of Dōjōji. Unlike the linear exploration of change through space and time of the first scroll, the second is a metaphoric exploration of one space. Its illustrations commence in a manner consistent with the increased religiosity and somber tone of the *monogatari*, while still maintaining the pronounced human emphasis of the work as a whole. They open with a sprawling scene: two male pilgrims, a mounted gentleman and his attendant on foot bearing his master's luggage, to the far right, leisurely approach a bridge and a large temple gate beyond.³¹ The initial illustrations express a sense of human control over the unruliness of nature, the imposing architecture suggesting a space of culture, in contrast to the unbounded, unruly space of nature of the first scroll.

Inside the temple grounds, the illustrations turn to a tightly linked sequence dominated by large-scale caricature of the temple inhabitants: priest, warrior monks (*sōhei* 僧兵), acolytes (*chigo* 稚児) armed with halberds, and temple 'strongmen' (*nōriki* 能力), who upend the bell in order to hide the monk; the *serifu* records their varied reactions to the fleeing monk's plea for assistance. In response to 'What an uproar! Can this be true?', the monk's only *serifu*, 'Why would I tell you empty lies?' constitutes a rhetorical defense nearly identical to his rhetorical question in the first scroll, 'Why would I deceive you?' Now, however, the temple community meets this avowal of innocent intent with skepticism. Like the villagers in the Western fable of the boy who cries wolf, the *etoki* audience is not so readily disposed to accept the monk's protestations the second time around.

³¹ The depiction of the temple itself bears little resemblance to the temple as it exists in the present day, nor, to judge from the surrounding terrain, to Dōjōji at the time. Rather, it resembles a generic temple of the Hachiman cult, possibly reconstructed from memory by an artist who had never personally laid eyes upon Dōjōji. Yoshida, p. 177, employs this observation as part of his argument that the *Engi* is based upon an earlier scroll, now lost. Mori, p. 38, also presents compelling evidence for the existence of such an Ur-scroll. The depiction of a bridge presumably spanning the Hidaka River (which, it was earlier implied, could be crossed only by ferry) would seem to contradict the story as it has unfolded in the first scroll. This might lend strength to Yoshida's hypothesis that the two scrolls were illustrated by different artists with no access to each other's work. But the strong continuity in the portraiture of the monk suggests that both scrolls were produced by one artist.

Following the temple residents' excited discussion, the illustrations mount in dramatic intensity. Now they stand wholly on their own, as if words were insufficient to express the events. The centerpiece of the scroll is a large picture of the serpent wrapped around the bell, flames emerging from its mouth. This image, which has come to symbolize not only the *Engi* scrolls but the entire Dōjōji legend in all its generic manifestations, represents both the culmination of the story and the story itself: narrativity turned into symbol.³² The bell is both mediator and barrier between subject and object, protector and agent of death for the monk crouched under it. The sexual imagery is obvious: the serpent's heated embrace seeks both to encompass the object in passion and to sear it in hatred. As the twin goals merge in orgasmic climax, gender roles are inverted: the woman-as-serpent represents the invasive phallus; the monk, the womb and enclosure.³³ This womb-like space may also be seen as an inversion of the ascetic practice of *komori* 籠, seclusion within a cave or similar enclosed space in order to increase spiritual power, to emerge as if reborn. The ironic result of this *komori* is the shriveled, charred figure of the monk seen in the next illustration, manifestly purged of flesh and presumably of the desires to which it is prey.³⁴

Serpent as Sinner, Serpent as Savior

Setsuwa accounts of the Dōjōji legend cast the serpent, a Buddhist symbol of attachment to worldly desires, as an embodiment of the woman's innate evil and lust.³⁵ In medieval times, sexual license or adultery was believed to incur karmic retribution in the form of rebirth as a snake: in the *otogi zōshi* 御伽草子 'Akimichi', for example, a faithful wife fears that she will be reborn as a snake should she have sexual relations with anyone but her husband. Initially, the Engi appears to duplicate this misogynist thrust. As does the *setsuwa*, it relates that several days later, an old priest had a dream in which the young monk appears as a snake, requesting that the Lotus Sutra be copied in order to free him from his state. It then appends a digressive commentary on the dangers posed by women:

³² Similar effects are discussed in Wendy Steiner, *Pictures of Romance: Form against Context in Painting and Literature*, University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 15–22.

³³ The Western mythic female serpent archetype is called lamia; in the Keats poem 'Lamia', the serpent also kills her human lover by coiling around him.

³⁴ Interestingly, one of the main objects of worship at Dōjōji, a large thousand-armed Kannon, probably dating to the Nambokuchō period, has been discovered to encase a smaller image of the same deity dating to the early 700s (Umehara, pp. 298–12), raising the intriguing possibility that the bell-encasing-monk motif reflects this model of enclosure.

³⁵ For a study of the changing role of the snake in Buddhist and Shinto mythology, see W. Michael Kelsey, 'Salvation of the Snake, the Snake of Salvation: Buddhist-Shinto Conflict and Resolution', in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 8:1 (1981), pp. 83–113. This article contains a number of valuable insights that shed light on the Dōjōji legend, particularly Kelsey's observation, 'it was mostly Buddhist monks and women who needed to fear the snake within themselves' (p. 110).

When we consider this carefully, there is no woman, high or humble, who is a stranger to jealousy. I could not begin to relate all the examples past and present. Even in the sutras, it is said that women are servants of hell, blocking the path to enlightenment. They are like bodhisattvas on the outside and demons on the inside.

Having established this point, however, the *monogatari* commentary turns a polemic about-face:

I have heard of no precedent for a woman instantaneously turning into a serpent. But then again . . . this woman was no ordinary person. The effect of her deep passion was to teach wild and unruly people to reflect. This demonstrates the deep will of Kannon and the Kumano deities to offer expedient means to salvation. Similarly, the Buddha came into this world to give us [the Lotus Sutra] as a means to teach all living beings, as it is reverently recorded in the sutra. Those who open and view [the Lotus Sutra] will be blessed by the Kumano deities. They should repeat the nenbutsu ten times, and call upon Kannon thirty-three times.

This pivotal passage represents a significant interpretive departure from the *setsuwa* versions. While affirming the customary view of woman as temptress, it applies the doctrine of *hōben* 方便, an expedient means or skillful device pointing the way to salvation, to reinterpret the woman-turned-serpent as a sacred agent of the will of Kannon and the Kumano deities. Thus, the suggestion embedded in the illustrations to the first scroll—that the woman's quest represents anti-pilgrimage ultimately imbued with soteriological value equal to or greater than a conventional pilgrimage—is overtly explicated and justified in the *monogatari* text of the second scroll.³⁶

As if to emphasize the interlinked nature of man and woman, text and illustration, in the conclusion, two small snakes are shown entwined and indistinguishable from each other. This depiction conforms to the pattern identified by Michael Kelsey in many other medieval Japanese Buddhist tales of encounters between snakes and humans, whereby 'it is not at all clear that victim and aggressor are to be taken as separate entities, especially in the stories of the monks.'³⁷ The monk and woman, pursued and pursuer, executed and executioner, represent a mutually forged unit, dissolved only through salvation secured by the power of Buddhism. Following a depiction of the monks copying and reciting the Lotus Sutra on the snakes' behalf, the tale reverts to *monogatari* narration in a coda describing how two heavenly beings appeared in the priest's dream to thank him for his intercession. In the corresponding illustration, the man and woman appear as heavenly beings, physically

³⁶ The reference to the Lotus Sutra invites the audience to consider the more positive connotations of the female serpent, expressed in the story of the dragon princess in the Devadatta chapter of the sutra, the major articulation of the concept of salvation for women, as well as in the nearly contemporaneous *Kegon Engi* 華嚴緣起 tale of the nun Zemmyō 善妙, who relinquishes her love for the priest Gishō 義相 and is transformed into a dragon that bears him to China.

³⁷ Kelsey, p. 105.

proximate but no longer touching each other, hair sedately tied back, heads adorned with chaplets, seated aloft on a Buddhist cloud denoting their attainment of salvation. Their faces bear only faint traces of their earthly identities: one being has slightly feminine features; the other has the pronounced nose of the monk. While the male snake initially requested the dedication to release him from the torments of his serpentine state, the now angelic woman thanks the old monk for his intercession.

The entire *Engi* narration has vacillated between woman and monk, each playing catalyst to the other's spiritual transformation through devices of repetition and inversion. The new dimensions accruing to the Dōjōji legend in the *Engi* challenge common assumptions and formulations of Buddhism, demonstrating a more sophisticated dynamic of interdependence and non-dualism. The serpent of the *Engi* embodies the evil that lurks within as well as the agent vanquishing that evil according to a Buddhist soteriological rubric. The path to perdition has ended in salvation; the route traced counter to the conventional pilgrimage route has proved to be a pilgrimage in its own right, an 'exercise in rebirth and magical transformation'.

The principle of non-dualism expressed through this inversion is duplicated in the medium of the illustrated *etoki* scroll, a fusion of graphic and written modes of human communication. When the *etoki* performer adds another dimension through vocalization, gestures, and commentary, the scroll becomes part of an even more comprehensive multimedia event. The note to Yoshiaki's cipher with which the *Engi* ends overtly testifies to yet another dimension: through the entertainment afforded by the *Engi*, the audience effectively participates in an experience of religious value. As in the tale itself, the sacred is justified and made manifest through the agency of the profane.

*Dōjōji Engi Emaki*³⁸

In the reign of the Emperor Daigo, in the Eighth Month of Enchō 6,³⁹ there came from Michinoku a handsome man dressed in the garb of a monk on a pilgrimage to Kumano. Now there was a house in Manago, in the Muro district of Kii province.⁴⁰ The owner was called the Steward of Seiji,⁴¹ and he had a beautiful daughter-in-law⁴² and many servants. This woman showered the monk with such unusual kindness that he was moved to wonder about her motives. At midnight, she came to him, slipped between the bedcovers, and lay down beside him.

‘Travelers never stop under our roof,’ she said. ‘Your coming here tonight is a sign that ours is no trifling bond. People sharing the shade of a tree or the waters of a stream are connected from former lives. I have had the deepest feelings for you ever since I saw you. What could possibly be wrong with that? You must remain here with me,’ she insisted.

The monk arose with a start. ‘I have been practicing ritual purity in observance of a long-standing vow. Through a hundred white clouds and a thousand villages and byways, enduring the waves of the blue sea, I have pursued my desire to pay homage to the Kumano deities. How could I possibly break this vow?’ he said, with no desire to yield. But the woman became extremely angry, so he said, ‘It will take only a few more days to fulfill my vow. After I complete my pilgrimage and pay homage to the deities, I shall return here and comply with your wishes.’

He departed giving no more thought to the matter, his religious integrity uncompromised.

The woman, however, was unable to think of anything but his eventual return. She counted off the days and made all manner of preparations for his arrival. Finally, as the long-awaited day drew to a close, she went out to the roadside and asked all the pilgrims passing by if they had seen the monk in question. One, the leader of a group headed toward Kumano, replied, ‘We passed a monk like that some distance back.’

³⁸ In this translation, brackets denote the speaker in an illustration, even though such identification does not appear in the scroll; and asterisks indicate *etoki* lines.

³⁹ 928. This is the first account to date the events precisely.

⁴⁰ *Yado* 宿, which could refer to anything from a private home to a commercial inn. Here, the woman’s later comment (‘Travelers never stop under our roof’) would suggest the former. Interpreting *yado* as ‘inn’, however, gives the story a different twist if we consider William LaFleur’s characterization of the inn as a temporary abode rife with the possibilities of sexual encounters and random encounters. See ‘Inns and Hermitages’, in *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan*, University of California Press, 1983.

⁴¹ Seiji can also be read as Kiyotsugu. This is the source of the name Kiyohime, as the woman would come to be called in many later versions of the tale.

⁴² *Yome* 嫁. Presumably her husband is dead, for otherwise she would have more to worry about than the monk’s constancy.

On hearing this, the woman screamed, 'He's deceived me!' and flew off like a bird, furiously shrieking, 'I'll search even the deepest thicket to find him!' as she ran off in pursuit. All the passers-by felt their hair stand on end.



1

[monk] Why would I deceive you? I'll return as soon as I can.

[woman] Please, be sure to come back.

[woman] *saki no yo no
chigiri no hodo wo
mikumano no
kami no shirube mo
nado nakaru beki*

Since this is a bond
sealed in a former life,
why should not it also be
a sign of the Kumano gods?

[monk] *mikumano no
kami no shirube to
kiku kara ni
nao yukusue no
tanomoshiki kana*

Hearing that this bond
is a sign of the Kumano gods,
how much more do I anticipate
what the future brings.

Well, then, wait for my return.



2

[woman] Please, your reverence, my man, a monk, has made off with a small cabinet of mine.⁴³ He is young, and is accompanied by an old monk.⁴⁴ How far off do you think he's gone?

[second pilgrim] I believe a person like that is now seven or eight *chō* away.⁴⁵

[third pilgrim] No, it's not seven or eight. He must have gone twelve or thirteen by now.

[woman] No, this is something I must ask the leader. Have you seen a young monk, wearing pilgrim's robes and a pack on his back, together with an old monk dressed in black robes, on their way back?

Thus she queried. When the leader replied, 'Someone like that is now far off,' she said, 'How vexing! He's deceived me! To the ends of the clouds, to the limits of the mists, I'll search him out as long as I live.' She then ran after him like a phoenix or something similar.



3

⁴³ Obviously she is lying, probably so as not to reveal that she harbors amorous intentions toward a monk on pilgrimage. On the other hand, the unfounded accusation may be interpreted as a way of righting the balance—of exchanging tit for tat, so to speak—rendering both woman and monk guilty of prevarication.

[woman] Under normal circumstances, this would be thought shameful, but I must catch up with that low-down priest. As long as I'm chasing after him, let this footwear fall where it may.

[yamabushi to female pilgrim] Did you get a look at that woman?

[female pilgrim] How frightening! I've never seen such a sight!

[woman] How maddening this is! Every moment that I can't lay my hands on that low-down priest, my heart knows no rest. Under normal circumstances, the shame of all this would be mortifying to me. But now, let my sandals and my scandals fall where they may.



4

[man leading mounted female pilgrim] Did you see the look on that woman's face?

[mounted female pilgrim] She certainly looks frightening!

[man offering dumplings to female pilgrim on foot] It's permitted when traveling, so please have some dumplings.

[female pilgrim on foot] But if people found out, it would be so embarrassing! Still, if it really doesn't matter, I'll go ahead and eat them.

[seated man tying leggings] Ah, the difficulty of silk gaiters! The ties have loosened—I wish they would stay put. They're just no good.

[woman] Oh, how maddening! What shall I do? Soon enough I shall discard this body and dissolve my life in the Kirime River. My tearful laments would lead me to drown myself, but I cannot summon the strength.

*Kirime Gotai Ōji⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *Setsuwa* versions explicitly state early in the narrative that the young monk is accompanied by an older comrade. Here, neither the introduction nor the illustrations indicate that the monk has a companion, but that it was nonetheless inserted somewhat vestigially by a scribe familiar with the *setsuwa* serves as evidence of slippage between text and illustration.

⁴⁵ 700–800 meters.

⁴⁶ 切目五体王子. An *etoki* tag line identifying one of the ninety-nine shrines (*ōji*) on the Kyoto-Kumano pilgrimage route. Dedicated to the worship of Amaterasu, the *ōji* provided additional opportunities for displays of piety as well as a respite from travel.



5

[woman] Hey, I have something to say to that monk! I think I've met that rascal before! Hey! Stop! Stop!

*This is the place called Ueno.

[monk] I have absolutely no such recollection! I expect you must have mistaken me for somebody else.

[woman spitting fire] I won't let you get much further!

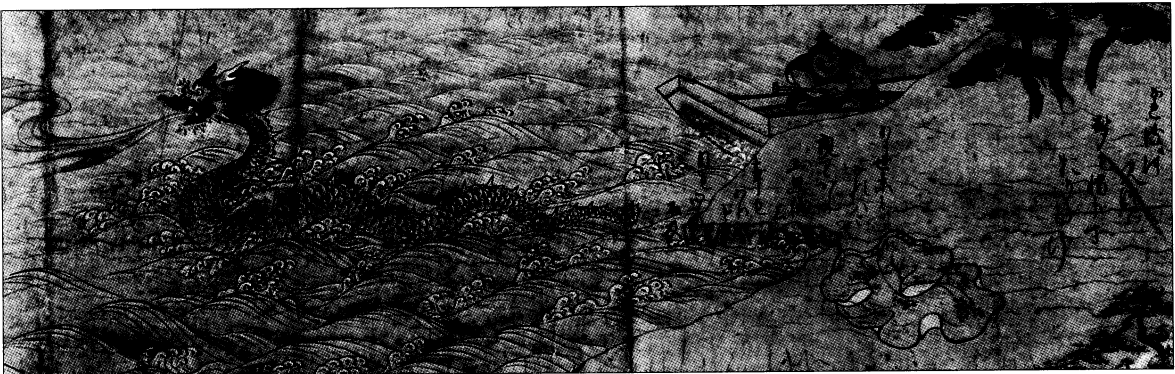
[monk] Save me, O Kongō Dōji! She's got such a vengeful face! I'm so frightened! Can this be evil karma from another life? I'm sorry that I'm wearing my backpack and cloak, but there's no point in worrying about it now.

*If you wish to know past cause, look to present effect.

*If you wish to know future effect, look to present cause.

[monk] What kind of evil karma did I create in a previous life to have this link now? Hail, Kannon, save me in this world and the next!

*A salt-burning hut.



6

Chanting invocations and praying in his heart, he escaped. When she was in human form, her heart was at odds with her body, and now she was turning into a serpent. Screaming at the top of his lungs, he ran on.

[ferryman] They say that one sees strange things like this at the end of the

world, things so terrible that the heart and eye are unable to comprehend.

At the river called Hidaka, suddenly there arose a great flood. The monk crossed over by boat, telling the ferryman, 'Someone is chasing me. Do not ferry her over, no matter what.' The priest quickly made his escape. As he had expected, the woman arrived at the river bank and told the ferryman to take her over, but he refused. She discarded her robe, turned into a large serpent, and forded the river.

It may be verified in records that the boatman was one of the eight manifestations⁴⁷ of Iwauchi Shrine.

Scroll 2

Dōjōji, in Hidaka-gun, was founded during the administration of Michinari, Minister of Kii, by imperial decree of the Mommu emperor. It is the sacred site of the first manifestation of the bodhisattva Senju Sengen Kannon in our land.

The monk went to this temple and poured out his plight to the community. Taking pity of him, they lowered the great bell, put him inside, and secured the bell tower. The serpent followed him to the temple and repeatedly circled the precincts. Arriving at the door that shielded the monk, she thudded on it with her tail, smashed it in, and entered. Wrapping her body around the bell, she clamped down on the loop with her teeth and lashed at it with her tail. For over six hours the flames raged. No one was able to draw near, and all felt their hair stand on end. They opened all four gates of the temple, and everyone, both within and without the precincts, waited speechlessly, tongues hanging out and eyes narrowed to slits.

Finally, blood spilled from the serpent's two eyeballs. She raised her head high, flicked her tongue, and returned whence she had come. When they approached the bell, the flames were still raging. They doused it with water and overturned it to peer inside. Of the priest, only bones resembling charcoal remained. The sight was unbearable, and none could suppress his tears. Of all the spectators, men and women, young and aged, from all around, there was no one who was unmoved by pity.

A few days later, an old monk had a dream in which two serpentine beings appeared. 'I am the monk inside the bell. Because of that evil woman, we have ended up as husband and wife. In my previous life I always carried the Lotus Sutra with me, but not enough time had passed for its benefit to fully protect me. My previous actions were insufficient, and so I fell into this evil karma. Please transcribe the Lotus Sutra and dedicate it on my behalf. Thus, without doubt I shall become enlightened and attain deliverance. Nothing can hinder your rebirth in paradise as well.' This apparition appeared neither as dream nor as reality.

⁴⁷ The text reads *hachikeshi*, probably a miscopying or corruption of *hachikeshin* 八化身.

When we consider this carefully, there is no woman, high or humble, who is a stranger to jealousy. I could not begin to relate all the examples past and present. Even in the sutras, it is said that women are servants of hell, blocking the path to enlightenment. They are like bodhisattvas on the outside and demons on the inside.⁴⁸

I have heard of no precedent for a woman instantaneously turning into a serpent. But then again, this woman was no ordinary person. The effect of her deep passion was to teach wild and unruly people to reflect. This demonstrates the deep will of Kannon and the Kumano deities to offer expedient means to salvation. Similarly, the Buddha came into this world to give us the Lotus Sutra as a means to teach all living beings, as it is reverently recorded in the sutra. Those who open and look upon it will be blessed by the Kumano deities. They should repeat the nenbutsu ten times, and call upon Kannon thirty-three times.



7

[Dōjōji monk] What an uproar!

[monk] Why would I tell empty lies?

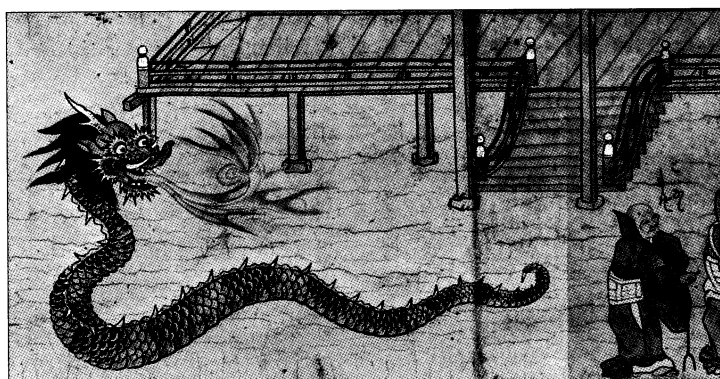
[Dōjōji monk with halberd] Leave it to me. I'll show you great strength. Don't make such a fuss.

[two scholar monks] I know nothing about this having occurred in China, nor have I heard of a single instance in this country. It's unspeakable.

[another monk with halberd] I did hear about a woman who killed herself in the Ikuta woods and became a demon upon her death.

[elder monk] Let's take the bell down and put it in the hall, then shut the door.

⁴⁸ This phrase appears in several medieval texts. Although attributed variously to the Nirvana or Lotus sutras, it cannot be traced to any known source.



8



9



10

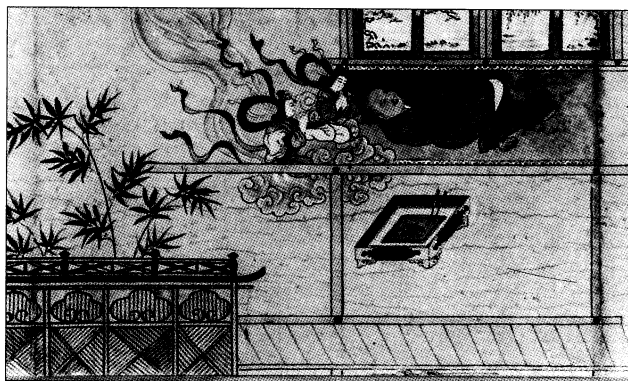
[monks lifting the bell] Why didn't you say so earlier? Pick up the bell. Be careful! Heave ho, put it there, just like that. It's big enough. Heave ho, heave ho.

How very strange!

What's going on?

All reverently pray.

After this, the old priest had a dream in which two beings wearing pure and beautiful robes came to speak to him. 'Thanks to the power of the Lotus Sutra, we have shed our serpentine bodies. I am in the Tōri heaven, and he has been reborn in the Tosotsu heaven.' They then parted from each other and seemed to fade off into the empty heavens.



11

All may rely on the intercession offered by the Lotus Sutra. It should be read ceaselessly. Immediately abandon provisional means and teach only the highest path.

This is the cipher of His Lordship, 15th day, Eleventh Month, Tenshō 1.⁴⁹ While staying at Kyōkokuji, he espied from afar the site of this tale, and came to view this scroll. He was profoundly moved, declaring that the events were unequaled in Japan, and that although they had taken place long ago, to see them thus depicted was truly marvelous. He wrote his cipher for generations to come. At this time, over wine, he offered to the head priest Eikyō a sword, belt, and horse.

⁴⁹ A reference to the shogun Ashikaga Yoshiaki, who at the time (1573) was fleeing Nobunaga's emissary, Hideyoshi. Kyōkokuji is some thirteen kilometers from Dōjōji.