

Chapter 17

WOMEN'S EDUCATION

In the formal sense of the term “education” as schooling through a defined curriculum such as existed in the Confucian College in Nara or the kind of instruction designed by Saichō for his monks on Mount Hiei or by Kūkai for his Academy of Arts and Sciences, there was no formal education for women in early Japan. Nevertheless, women clearly did learn enough to take a prominent part in the life of the country, and especially in its cultural life. Great writers like Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon were highly literate, and the court life of Nara and Heian Japan, in which literary culture figured so prominently, could not have been so brilliant had it not been for the participation of women at the highest levels.

Women obviously had access to learning in the home and at court, just as women did in Han and Tang China, even though they were somewhat disadvantaged in its pursuit. Especially among the upper classes with the leisure to devote to the cultural refinements they so prized, women had available not only a considerable body of classical literature but also some of the same primers and texts as the Han and Tang Chinese: the *Classic of Filiality* (Ch: *Xiao jing*) and the *Admonitions for Women* (Ch: *Nüjie*) of Ban Zhao, the *Household Instructions of the Yan Family* (Ch: *Yan-shi jiaxun*), the *Analects for Women* (Ch: *Nü lunyu*), and *The Learning Quest* (Ch: *Meng qiu*).¹

1. See de Bary and Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Traditions*, vol. 1, chaps. 18 and 23.

In this section we present three early Japanese texts for the edification of women in Buddhism. They were specifically intended for a female audience and spoke to the situation and condition in which women found themselves. Nevertheless, instead of emphasizing the social roles of women or addressing their specific problems or potentialities, these works propose a way of spirituality common to men and women (the one exception being the reference to the particular moral and spiritual failings of women as seen in traditional Buddhism). The fundamental spiritual problems addressed in these writings are those of all humankind, and most of the guidance offered would apply equally well to men.

The first of these texts, *Illustrations of the Three Jewels*² (*Sanbōe*) by Minamoto Tamenori (984), was addressed to a young nun; the second, *A Companion in Solitude* (*Kankyo no tomo*), by a Tendai monk to a court lady; and the third, *Mirror for Women* (*Tsuma kagami*), by the Zen monk Mujū Ichien in 1300, to lay women. In its adaptation of a secular genre (the illustrated narrative scroll or *emaki*), the first work is strikingly reflective of Heian culture in that although it was written for a woman who had already entered the religious life, it cautions her against the continuing powerful attraction of, and emotional involvement with, the same aesthetic culture she has supposedly renounced. There is great similarity here to the problems of the spiritual and religious life as revealed in *The Tale of Genji* and *The Pillow Book* and to the need for the religious message to be adapted to the same cultural features, that is, literary and artistic genres, that might otherwise distract one from it. In this respect, despite the ostensible distinction between lay and religious life, in practice it was somewhat blurred.

Illustrations of the Three Jewels was an illustrated collection of Buddhist tales in three volumes, compiled for and presented to an imperial princess, Sonshi Naishinnō, who had recently taken vows as a nun, and it was written to serve as her guide to Buddhism. Tamenori offered her an array of exemplary tales that showed how merit generated through good deeds and practices would yield rewards in both this life and the next. He included stories from the lives of Buddhas, based on scriptural sources; tales of Japanese Buddhists and miracles produced through their devotions, adapted from other Japanese sources, chiefly a *Japanese Chronicle of Miracles* (*Nihon ryōiki*); and accounts of the origins, organization, and benefits of various Buddhist rites, for which he drew on court and monastic documents, scripture, and, in one or two cases, personal observation. Tamenori then added a general preface and three other prefaces to bind the tales together in three volumes, or fascicles.³

2. Rendered elsewhere in this series as Three Treasures.

3. The preceding paragraph and the following introductory material on the *Sanbōe* are from Kamens, *The Three Jewels*, pp. 3–4.

Tamenori's stated purpose was to give Sonshi information helpful to her spiritual advancement, but he also believed that by providing such guidance and rejoicing in her accomplishments, he would simultaneously augment his own store of merit and increase the likelihood of his own salvation. He claimed that this particular kind of literature—which literally chastised evil and encouraged good and was based on the irrefutable teachings of the Buddha—was superior to the fanciful romances (*monogatari*) favored by women of Sonshi's day and Sonshi's class. But to convey his message most effectively, Tamenori adapted the form of the illustrated *monogatari* for his own purposes and thus devised a special book designed to fulfill his special goals and particularly suited to the needs and capacities of his intended reader.

Tamenori wrote, "I have had illustrations of several exemplary stories made, and I submit them to you together with these words from the scripture and from other works." Accordingly, he prepared for Sonshi a book that was unlike any of its acknowledged sources and unlike any of its known models in the genre of Buddhist tale collections. It was, instead, an *emaki*, a text combined with pictures, like many of the books read at court and in the private quarters of aristocratic women in mid-Heian Japan.

GENERAL PREFACE TO ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE THREE TREASURES

Tamenori's innovative choice of the *emaki* format for *Sanbōe*, a serious didactic and devotional work, made its content all the more accessible and palatable to Sonshi; yet in its author's view, its content and purpose made it a far better book than those whose form it imitated. In a passage of the "General Preface" that is the most quoted portion of the whole work, Tamenori condemns the *monogatari* and criticizes their readers for allowing themselves to be taken in by so much of what he considered to be make-believe. He approaches the subject by imagining how Sonshi will spend her time now that she has left her old way of life for that of a nun. Concerned about the temptations to which she may yield in her idleness, he warns her against too much enjoyment of games of *go* and *koto* practice before moving in for the real attack.

Then there are the so-called *monogatari*, which have such an effect upon ladies' hearts. They flourish in numbers greater than the grasses of Ōaraki Forest, more countless than the sands on the Arisomi beaches. They attribute speech to trees and plants, mountains and rivers, birds and beasts, fish and insects that cannot speak; they invest unfeeling objects with human feelings and ramble on and on with meaningless phrases like so much flotsam in the sea, with no two words together that have any more solid basis than does swamp grass growing by a river bank. *The Sorceress of Iga*, *The Tosa Lord*, *The Fashionable Captain*, *The Nagai Chamberlain*,

and all the rest depict relations between men and women just as if they were so many flowers or butterflies, but do not let your heart get caught up even briefly in these tangled roots of evil, these forests of words.

Long ago it was written:

Contemplate the body:
it is but rootless grass
lying on the riverbank;
As for this life:
it is but a small boat
drifting at the channel's edge.⁴

And elsewhere:

To what shall I compare this life?
To white waves of foam trailing behind
a boat putting out at break of day.⁵

Thus, in both China and Japan, people who understood the essence of things expressed the same thought. Indeed, in the teachings of the truly enlightened, universally compassionate Buddha we find these words: "This world is absolutely insubstantial, like the bubbles on the water, the shadow of the mist. You must reject this world as soon as possible and free yourselves from it." . . .⁶

One thousand nine hundred and thirty-three years have passed since Buddha Shākyamuni left this world. We may now be in the Period of the Imitated Teaching but surely only a few years of this interim period remain to us.⁷ Those who have the misfortune to be born as human beings at this time have less chance of receiving the Buddha's teaching than a thread dangled from heaven has of going through the eye of a needle in the middle of the sea. Even if they manage to free themselves from this life, they will never have any assurance of what will become of them hereafter. At this time there is nothing to do but contemplate the Buddha, hear his Teachings, and revere his Clergy.

4. This Chinese verse appears in the same form in *Wakan rōeishū*, in a section with other poems on the topic of "Impermanence" (see NKBT 73:254), where it is attributed to Louwei, which may be a mistranscription for Yenwei.

5. This verse appears in slightly different form in the *Manyōshū* 3 (no. 351), where it is attributed to the monk Mansei (NKBT 4:179).

6. A verbatim quotation from the sixth chapter of the Lotus Sūtra (TD 9, no. 262:47b).

7. If the year A.D. 984 is the starting point for Tamenori's calculation, this places the Buddha's demise in the year 958 B.C.E. The "Period of the Imitated Teaching" (*zōhō*) is the second of the "Three Periods." It was widely believed that this period would end in 1052.

Have you not heard of the elder of Rājagrha⁸ who gathered treasures and rejoiced in the flourishing of his household, only to die and become a snake whose lot it was to guard his former mansion and storehouse? And do you not know of the lady of Shrāvastī who constantly gazed into her mirror in order to admire her own beauty, only to become an insect at the end of her life and dwell in what was formerly her own skull?⁹ While they lived they never thought they would become a snake or an insect, but they took inordinate pride in wealth and beauty, and so they brought their fate upon themselves. So, a flourishing household is a likely site for sinning; you must abandon it and seek out the Buddha's Country. Have no second thoughts for your worldly beauty; forget it and pray that you may attain the Buddha's Body. . . .

The second daughter of my liege, the Retired Emperor Reizei, whose beauty puts the spring flowers to shame and silences even the cool wind in the pines, was chosen to live in the Ninefold Palace, but now she despises and seeks release from this world with its Five Pollutions.¹⁰ Shrīmālā, the daughter of Prasenajit, needed no one to inspire her faith.¹¹ Candraprabhā was the wife of King Udāyi, and she voluntarily shaved her head, without anyone having suggested that she do so. They were born into noble families and achieved high station, but since their sacred destiny was to be reborn upon the lotus, they made haste to plant the seeds of the Law; since they nurtured lofty intentions of becoming as perfect as the full moon, they strove constantly toward the light that shines on those who take the Buddha's vows. When we compare the present age to the ancient past, the time may seem different, but the act is essentially the same. Jeweled blinds and brocade curtains may have graced your former abodes, but now you shall tend to the dew on the flower and the perfumed incense.¹² Even so, the spring days linger, with nightingales warbling softly in the grove, and the autumn nights seem endless, as the light from your candle and its shadow on the wall grow dim. *Go* may seem like a pleasing way to pass the time, but there is no profit to be had in challenging others to games of skill. The *koto* may also serve as your companion for the night, but you should not let yourself become too attached to its sound.

[Kamens, trans., *The Three Jewels*, pp. 91–93]

8. Rājagrha (Öshajō) was one of the great Indian cities at the time of Shākyamuni.

9. This story is quoted from *Gengukyō* (TD, no. 242:4:378b).

10. "The second daughter" is Sonshi Naishinnō. The "Five Pollutions" are marks of a degenerate age, during which (1) life spans are shortened; (2) kalpas are shortened; (3) ignorance and evil are shortened; (4) ignorance and evil desires proliferate; (5) heretical views prevail; and (6) human life is extremely corrupt.

11. Shrīmālā (Shōman), the daughter of King Prasenajit, is the subject of the Shrīmālā Sūtra.

12. The "jeweled blinds and brocade curtains" are poetic emblems of a royal lady's chamber which, in Sonshi's case, have now been replaced by emblems of a nun's way of life.

KEISEI: A COMPANION IN SOLITUDE

A *Companion in Solitude* (*Kankyo no tomo*) is believed to have been written in 1222 by the monk Keisei (1189–1268), of the Fujiwara Kujō branch, whose religious associations were with Tendai esotericism and who was a friend of the Kegon monk Myōe (see chapter 10). The *Companion* is a collection of stories written for a high-ranking court lady for her spiritual edification, moving from accounts of prominent monks to ones of ordinary monks and laymen and then, down the scale, to women.

The stories excerpted here reveal the ambivalence of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Japanese religiosity with regard to the life of the senses and human emotions. In the first story, such attachments are seen as at once sinful and compelling in their emotional appeal, reflecting the same ambivalence in Heian literature. From this point of view, even the impurities traditionally attached to womanhood can be seen, in the light of the equation of Nirvana and Samsara, as instruments of salvation.

About the Religious Awakening of the Nun Who Lived in the Mountains of Tsu Province

Long ago there was a nun who built herself a rough straw hut in the depths of the mountains in Tsu province. She abstained from eating the five cereals, and would pluck the seeds from a yew tree and use them for making her food. . . . The nun had a pale complexion and her appearance had declined to such an extent that it would be impossible to know whether she was good-looking or ugly.

A certain person met her by chance and asked her why she was living in such a place. She replied, “When I was at the height of my youth, I lost my husband. After completing the religious services of the forty-ninth day,¹³ I shaved my head and entered the mountains. I have never returned to my village since. I loved my husband deeply, but when he died so suddenly I realized that the relationship between man and wife is but ephemeral, and so I became what I am today. I have several children. I owned a great deal of land and other possessions. Realizing, however, that all these are merely companions of one’s dreams, I cast them all away.” . . .

A woman’s nature is such that whether of high rank or low birth, she pins her hopes on all sorts of things, but in the end is unable to realize her expectations. The depth of this lady’s heart that made her decide to receive the tonsure was, by contrast, truly profound.

In truth we hear of many instances of couples who want to grow old together, pledging that they would be buried in the same grave and praying that they

13. The period after death and before rebirth in a new life, believed to last for forty-nine days, was known as *chūin*, or the intermediate state between death and the next life.

may be together again in the next world. Their acts are full of expectations for the future, but in fact these constitute a deep crime.¹⁴ . . .

Throughout their lives people constantly think about love. Comparing their love to the flames of Mt. Fuji,¹⁵ they display a heart that is tortured by love. How they must suffer during their lives! The sorrow of those who are endowed with great sensitivity must become greater and deeper, depending on the time and situation they are in. . . .

Then again there was the case of the person who compared his life with the ephemeral dew and said that he would gladly exchange it for one meeting with his lover. The bond that tied these lovers must have been truly hard to bear. These relationships are at once pitiable and shamelessly unmindful of the Buddha's Dharma.

[Pandey, "Kankyo no tomo," pp. 335-337]

The "adaptive means" by which the passions might be made to serve enlightenment are illustrated by several stories in the *Companion in Solitude*. In one account, the author cites a high councillor at court as an impressive example of enlightenment for, after becoming passionately involved with a court lady, having deserted her "in order to bring home to her the ephemeral nature of such attachments, which she could not have understood by herself."¹⁶ However one interprets this last comment, the following serves as a contrasting case of how a court lady turned the passionate advances of a monk into a lesson in disillusionment/enlightenment.

How a Noble Lady Serving at Court Displayed Her Impure Form

Long ago there was a certain monk of high standing who fell in love with a lady-in-waiting of royal birth. He must have been unable to keep silent, for he fervently revealed his feelings and the depth of his heart to her.

The lady hesitated a while and said, "Why do you torment yourself so? When I return home from the court, I shall certainly let you know." The monk had thought that his interest in the lady was in no way out of the ordinary, but now his feelings quite surpassed those he had held for her before.

Not long after, the lady informed him that she had returned to her home and that she would be there that night. The monk made the necessary preparations and set off to meet her.

When he arrived, the lady appeared before him and said, "What I wanted

14. *Tsumi fukaku*, or deeply sinful, as a violation of Buddhist precepts.

15. The fire and smoke that rose from Mount Fuji were popular symbols of the ardor and passion of a person in love.

16. Pandey, "Women, Sexuality, and Enlightenment," p. 339.

to say was so important that it could not be done lightly, and so I came back here.

“This body of mine is an indescribably smelly and foul object. The inside of my head is filled to overflowing with gray matter. Inside the skin, bones and flesh are coiled together. Blood and pus flow through the whole body, and there is not a single thing in the body that one would want to get close to. Despite this, I have somehow made this body appear attractive by decorating it and using all kinds of perfumes. If you were to see my true form, you would undoubtedly find it most repulsive and frightening. It was to tell you this in some detail that I invited you here to my home.”

The lady then called to one of her servants to bring in a light, which was burning bright red on a stand. She then removed the partition between them and showed herself to the monk. She said, “This is what I look like. How can you bear to look at me?”

Her hair was standing up, extremely disheveled like that of a demon. Her face, once so refined, was blue in some places and yellow in others. Her legs had lost their former color and were filthy. Her robes were covered here and there with blood, and smelled unbearably repulsive. She came forward and, weeping without restraint, continued her lament.

“What would happen if I stopped using cosmetics and adorning myself? If I no longer took care of my body and let it follow its natural course? Then both my physical form and my clothes would undoubtedly look like this. As you are a person who is closely associated with the Buddha’s Way, I was afraid of showing you my false form, and so I have dropped all pretenses and showed you my real appearance.”

The monk was dumbfounded and, shedding tears, he told her, “I have indeed met a true friend who has guided me to reform myself.”

[Pandey, “Women, Sexuality, and Enlightenment,” pp. 349–50]

MUJŪ ICHIEN: *MIRROR FOR WOMEN*

Mirror for Women was written in 1300 by Mujū Ichien (1226–1312), a monk with broad theoretical interests who ultimately allied himself with Rinzaï Zen’s Enni Ben’en (Shōichi, 1202–1280), founder of the Tōfukuji in Kyoto. In 1262, he restored the Chōboji in Miya (now Nagoya), where he lived until his death a half century later. Here he wrote a noteworthy collection of Buddhist “tales” (*setsuwa*), *Sand and Pebbles* (*Shasekishū*, 1279–1283), the *Mirror for Women*, *Collection of Sacred Assets* (*Shōzaishū*, 1299), and *Casual Digressions* (*Zōtanshū*, 1305). The prominent role of women in the early days of the Chōboji and their continuing support during Mujū’s tenure there may help explain his concern for women’s salvation.

Nevertheless, although Mujū often refers to the types of religious devotionism

popular among women (especially Amida and the Pure Land), for the most part his argument is addressed to the human condition in general, not in ways that are gender specific. He quickly relativizes all moral, social, and cultural values, which become insignificant in comparison to the fundamental need to detach oneself from all worldly, even human, concerns and apply oneself to the "one great life and death matter": to rise beyond suffering and illusion to realize one's inherent Buddha-nature.

One of several specific references to women—quite late in the work and not a high priority—is his recital of a traditional formula concerning the faults and failings of women propounded by Daoxuan, the seventh-century founder of the Chinese disciplinary sect noted for his codifications of monastic rules. Without further elaboration, Mujū characteristically relates a couple of moral anecdotes with a humorous twist and then comments that "there are among women many instances of deep compassion and religious aspiration. The Sūtra of Meditation on the Buddha Amitayus contains the account of Lady Vaidehi, and the Lotus Sūtra speaks of the daughter of the Dragon King attaining Buddhahood." Then, abruptly, he once again returns to the non-gender-specific issues of the human condition and liberation from all worldly involvements.

Difficult to attain is birth in human form, but although we may now have attained it and we may have seen with our eyes the impermanence of the cycle of birth-and-death, we may not feel this in our hearts; then we are like trees and stones. Difficult to encounter is the Buddha's teaching, but although we have now encountered it, it may merely move our ears and we do not learn from it; then we are just beasts in human skin. . . . For the sake of our bodies we cut short the lives of living beings, savoring them on the tongue. Blindly we covet material goods, devising schemes to obtain clothing and food. But these material goods are like a sweet drug which intoxicates us so that we do not practice the Law of Buddha. . . . Throughout life we tend to encourage evil and neglect good, and so we produce and accumulate only evil karma in our hearts. Covetousness is the karmic cause for rebirth as a hungry ghost. Anger is the karmic cause for rebirth in the hells; at our death it becomes the fires of hell to scorch us. And ignorance is the karmic cause for rebirth as an animal; in the future life we assume the form of a beast, and as a result we are subjected to the agony of being slaughtered. . . .

We say that a man is wise who takes care of himself, looks after others, visits his parents' birthplace, and acts to requite the benefits which have accrued to him over several lifetimes. The household of a man who accumulates good deeds prospers, while the family of one who cultivates wickedness is destroyed. When a man has committed no evil, why should he worry? They tell of men who spend a considerable portion of their wealth performing acts of merit in the discharge of filial obligations toward parents, teachers, and superiors. Nevertheless, only a seventh part of the merit redounds to the advantage of the deceased, while six-sevenths benefits the doer of the action. A man may neglect

the Buddha's Law himself from the mistaken notion that he has descendants who will pray for his deliverance. But not to seek the Way of the Buddha oneself is foolishness indeed. . . .

Our actions may be of such merit as to help the blessed spirits of parents, teachers, and superiors, the objects of our solicitude. But although we may transform their grave crimes into minor ones or change a life of misfortune to happiness, our own actions cannot become the infallible road to birth in the Pure Land for either donor or recipient. . . .

Thus one's own practice of the *nembutsu* results in one's own birth in the Pure Land rather than another's. Nor are we to imagine that having another person call upon the name of Buddha or recite the scriptures can be a direct cause of our own birth in the Pure Land and attainment of Buddhahood, or that of our parents, teachers, or superiors who are the object of solicitude. The fact is that even though a deep determination to transfer merit to others, substituting light for heavy retribution, may result in felicitous karma through which those other people receive rebirth into a good life, at one moment they rise, only to fall in the next, for the karma of retribution is not exhausted. . . .

People ordinarily think that wisdom consists in cleverly figuring out the ways of the world and diligently manipulating others to consolidate their estate, passing it on to heirs and later generations, that is, setting themselves up and teaching others to act in this way. But since we err in attaching importance to mundane affairs and in becoming estranged from the Buddha's Law, this worldly wisdom is thought to be one of the Eight Impediments to spiritual progress, an enemy who invites us to rebirth in the Evil Directions. The disposition to store up treasure is called "covetousness," and it is a serious offense drawing down upon us karma which results in transmigration. . . .

The mind of the sage is completely untroubled by the problem of good and bad karma, nor is he vexed by the cleanness or impurity of the water in the great ocean [i.e., he is tolerant of all men and conditions]. It is as though he does not mind the impurity of the land. Within the general defilement, he employs delusion to attain what is of primary importance. . . .

Prince Shōtoku was a manifestation of the Kuse Kannon and manifested himself in our country in order to propagate Buddhism. Nevertheless, he had five children. Moreover, although he attacked Moriya and committed the crime of murder, we cannot speak of him as the "immoral prince." All of these actions were the exalted behavior of the bodhisattvas, virtuous deeds performed in the state of Buddhahood, skillful means to help sentient beings. Having noted that karma and liberation are one, the sage understands and manifests the principle that good and bad are inseparable, and he realizes the identity of illusion with enlightenment. . . .

People venerate as a Buddha anyone who, in the eyes of ordinary men and fools, excels in religious exercises and is endowed with honor and virtue. But there is no certainty that release from birth-and-death and the attainment of

enlightenment will follow from his actions and character, nor from his wisdom and cleverness. . . .

The mass of men sink or float in the sea of birth-and-death in accordance with their state of mind. The man of deep resolve who would escape the round of birth-and-death will certainly realize enlightenment, while the man without this resolve continues to transmigrate, receiving the retribution of rising and falling in the sea of mortality. Those who do not make use of the way things operate are stubborn and incorrigible, wretched people who nullify the efforts of the various Buddhas to help sentient beings and who behave carelessly as regards the skillful devices of the patriarchs. . . .

Even if a man is lord of a province, compared to the king of the whole country he is like an ordinary person with respect to his superior. So also, although the results of a man's actions bring him to the level of the great rulers Indra and Brahmā, yet compared to the highest levels of enlightenment, it is as mud to a cloud. The gods in the heavens see the span of human life as even more evanescent than that of the May fly that is born in the morning and does not live till evening; they see the human body as inferior to that of an ant or a frog. . . .

Many serious instances of the sins of women, among the unregenerate who are all deluded, are cited in sacred scriptures and commentaries. Because of their abundance, there is no time to discuss these sins in detail. The Preceptor Daoxuan¹⁷ said, "Basically these are the seven grave vices of women. First of all, like the myriad rivulets flowing into the sea, they have no compunction about arousing sexual desire in men. Secondly, when we observe women in a house, we see that their jealous disposition is never idle. Friendly in speech, in their hearts is malice; with no thoughts for others, they are concerned only with their own affairs. Thirdly, on account of a disposition prone to deceit, they smile at a man even before he has said anything. In their speech, they say that they empathize, while in their hearts they are distant and cherish thoughts of envy. A person who faces you but whose thoughts look the other way is said to be prone to deceit. Fourthly, neglecting their religious practices and concentrating on how they may deck themselves with fine clothes, they think of nothing but their appearance and desire for the sensual attentions of others. Their hearts are attached to desire without regard to whether the object of their attention is closely related or distant. Fifthly, they take deceit as their guide and their honest words are few. They often vow to bring evil to others without fearing that they are piling up sins for themselves. Sixthly, burning themselves in the fires of desire, they have no shame toward others. Their hearts deluded, they fear not

17. Daoxuan (J: Dōsen, 596–667) is noted for his codification of monastic rules. Mujū's Japanese rendering of these seven grave vices is from *Rules to Purify Mind and Maintain Insight* (*Jing xin jie guan fa*, TD 45, no. 1893:1893).

the tip of the sword; as though drunk, they know no shame. Seventh, their bodies are forever unclean, with frequent menstrual discharges. Seeing that both pregnancy and childbirth are both foul and the afterbirth unclean, the evil demons vie for possession while the good deities depart. The foolish find these things attractive, but the wise are repelled.” . . .

When the Buddha was still in this world, there was a woman named Ciñcā, who from the first had belonged to a family of unbelievers and was deeply jealous of him. With the idea of bringing shame to the Buddha, she attached a cord to a bowl which she hung around her neck and down over her stomach beneath her clothes, and then went to where the Buddha was expounding the Law. Wending her way into the area where bodhisattvas, disciples, and beings from the heavenly world were as thick as dense vegetation, she faced the Buddha and stroked her stomach. “Look at this! I am pregnant with the Buddha’s child,” she cried, abusing him and declaring that she would give birth and disgrace the Buddha. Now one of the Buddha’s disciples, the holy Maudgalyāna, excelled in supernatural powers. Seeing what was taking place, he transformed himself into a mouse and chewed through the cord holding the bowl, which then fell before the Buddha. As the woman’s stomach vanished, the Buddha’s shame was transferred to Ciñcā and she paled with vexation.¹⁸

Again in India there lived a woman called Yajñadattā, whose mind was as restless as a monkey’s. Once when she held up a mirror that she might admire her face, she became extremely agitated at not being able to see herself. “I have lost my head! What has happened?” she cried. Utterly distraught she shrieked at the heavens and pounded the earth, but in the end she was never able to see her head. All sentient beings possess the Buddha-nature, which can never leave us even for a short time. But because we do not show forth the moon of our inner nature, for it is obscured from view by dense clouds of delusive thought, we are regarded as the unregenerate, forever sunk in the mire. Although Yajñadattā did not actually lose her head, she lost it in the sense that in the agitation of her heart her mind clouded over.¹⁹

In China national calamities are said to have originated with three women. And in our own country Emperor Go-Toba fomented the [Jōkyū] Insurrection at the instigation of a woman [Kamegiku] and was ultimately sent into exile. Such cases are common, it is true, but there are also among women many instances of deep compassion and religious aspiration. The Sūtra of Meditation on the Buddha Amitayus²⁰ contains the account of Lady Vaidehi, and the Lotus

18. This story and its variants appear in several early texts, especially the *Treatise on Great Wisdom* (*Daichidoron*, TD 25, no. 1509), which Mujū had studied in his youth.

19. Ennyadatta, that is, Yajñadattā, is sometimes referred to as a man (Yajñadatta), although the anecdote is similar; compare the *Shūrangama Sūtra* (*Ryōgonkyō*), T 945.

20. *Kammuryōjūkyō*, TD 12, no. 365.

Sūtra speaks of the daughter of the Dragon King attaining Buddhahood.²¹ If a woman is aware of the great burden of sin which women bear, she will revise her attitudes and reject the business of fame and fortune in this world of a single dream, betaking herself to the practice of the Buddha's Law, which helps us from life to life and from world to world. Throughout life, evil advances and the good retreats; there are actions which simply take us "from darkness to darkness" and from the depths submerge us into even lower depths. Karma is like a balance—it pulls to the heavier side. We may weigh and determine which was greater between the good and bad of a person's life, between the good and bad karma which one generates during a year, a month, a day, a moment. When evil is dominant, one will fall into Evil Paths; when virtue is dominant, one will attain good rebirth. The recording angels meticulously note the smallest error on their tablets.

Mujū was broadly familiar with the other schools of Buddhism and, like many others of his age, readily accepted Buddhist-Shinto syncretism. His tolerance of other schools follows the pattern already set forth in the Lotus Sūtra and Tendai doctrine, which he had studied in his youth. The final, unqualified "truth" was an immediate experience transcending all rational formulations. In the prologue to Collection of Sand and Pebbles (Shasekishū) he states: "There is not just one method for entering the Way, the causes and conditions for enlightenment being many. Once a person understands their general significance, he will see that the purport of the various teachings does not vary. And when he puts them into practice, he will find that the goal of the myriad religious exercises is the same."

Inasmuch as natural dispositions are not all identical, the teaching has a myriad differences. The Mahāyāna, Hīnayāna, provisional and absolute teachings are all discourses of the one teacher Shākyamuni. This is to attract those who have an affinity for the Buddhist teaching by sampling and suggesting a partial version of what has been said. When a man who practices one version of the Way of the Buddha vilifies another because it differs from his own sect, he cannot avoid the sin of slandering the Law. It has been said that a man who slanders the methods of another out of attachment to his own beliefs will surely suffer the pains of hell even though he observes the commandments.²² However, if there is an occasion to promote Mahāyāna by persuading people to convert, there is great advantage in breaking their attachment to the Hīnayāna and drawing them into the Mahāyāna. But under no circumstances should one

21. Lotus Sūtra, 12. See de Bary and Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1, chap. 16.

22. Mujū here apparently paraphrases a verse from chapter 26 of the Lotus Sūtra. See Watson, trans., *The Lotus Sūtra*, p. 310.

reject the Mahāyāna and enter the Hīnayāna. The difficult and painful practices are for the foolish; easy conduct and practice are for the wise. . . .

The greatest fruits of Buddhahood to be realized from the Hīnayāna are considered to be far inferior by the Buddhas of the Mahāyāna. The *Explanation of Mahāyāna* (*Shakuron*) says

Attaining the name of Buddha “by self-cultivation is later viewed as a joke.”²³ That is, although a man may be called a Buddha according to the Hīnayāna, when viewed later from the standpoint of the Mahāyāna, he becomes a thing of amusement. A man who would practice the Way of the Buddha should never stop along the way saying that he has attained what in fact he has not attained, or that he has realized what in fact he has not realized. . . .

The *Calming and Contemplation*²⁴ says: “The Great Sages in their wanderings all sought the Law without respect to the source. The youth of the Himalayas²⁵ took half a verse from an *asura*, and Indra venerated an animal, taking it as his teacher.” Just as their resolve to practice the Buddha’s teachings was so great, we too should take advantage of our youth and not neglect religious practice. It will do us no good to regret having ignored the One Great Matter and to have vainly passed our span of life in the karma of transmigration. To place the obsessions of the deluded mind before all else is not to know how to distinguish jewels from seaweed.

I do not care about the laughter of those who will come later and read this. Nor does it benefit me at all that I have collected together these leaves of words like free-floating grasses, diverting myself with a water-soaked reed which traces my thoughts as they ripple through my mind. But should a woman make these precepts her constant companion [as she would a mirror], she will show herself to be a person of sensibility, a follower of the Way. And so I give this work the title, *Mirror for Women*.

[Morrell, “Mirror for Women,” pp. 51–75]

23. The quotation actually appears in Kūkai’s *Precious Key to the Sacred Treasury* (*Hizō hōyaku*), not in the *Shaku[makae]ron* (TD 32, no. 1668), a commentary on the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* (*Daijō kishinron*, TD 32, no. 1666) by a certain Nāgārjuna other than the great Mādhyamika philosopher.

24. *Maka shikan*, chap. 4B.

25. That is, Gautama.