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From the Public to the Private at Kiyohira's Chūson-ji

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IT IS SAID THAT when the warlord Fujiwara no Kiyohira 藤原清衡 lay dying at his mansion in Hiraizumi 平泉 in 1128, he remained uncommonly peaceful as he chanted quietly to himself.¹ Perhaps his composure resulted from a deep-seated satisfaction in having brought to near completion a shrine and temple complex, Chūson-ji 中尊寺, so grand that envoys from the Kyoto court had made the two-month journey north to Hiraizumi to attend its consecration in the spring of 1126.² Perhaps, again, such composure arose from other, less-public aspects of the Chūson-ji project that, nonetheless, are also crucial to an informed understanding of its likely meaning to a man like Kiyohira in the immediate circumstances of his world.

Why seek out such meanings in these uneasy times, when meaning itself, like its referents, is but a kind of quicksand in the fields of historical inquiry? In the new pedagogy, as on the pages of Borges, anything is possible because everything is a "text." This study resists such a hermeneutics and flatly considers the societal and the historical, in which subject and project are a reality, not a cipher, and from which textualization seems nothing more than a flight of terror into the timeless haven of self-reflection. Hence this study situates Kiyohira as a social being in a social history. Of course there is always the question

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¹ See *Azuma kagami* 1 (vol. 32), p. 353 (Bunji 5.9.17).

² *Kiyohirakō goganmon* 清衡公御願文, in *Chūson-ji kyōzō monjo*, pp. 41–42.

“*which* history,” and so this study is as much about historians as it is about a warlord who lived some eight hundred years ago. Meaning, in all of its sedimentations, is generated in this problematic. That meaning is social, that it pushes against the complacencies of knowledge as mere commodity, and that it settles there as a liberating force is the basic tenet of this essay, which, looking for meaning in the schizophrenic present of postmodernity, begins with a nonentity from the past.

Marginalities

One of the least-studied buildings at Chūson-ji is its nondescript sūtra repository (*kyōzō* 経蔵). Most visitors ignore it for the nearby Konjiki-dō 金色堂 with its walls of gold, hidden mummies, and renowned Buddhist splendor. Scholars too are largely indifferent. Few have remarked on the repository’s location so close to Konjiki-dō, nor commented on its function within the total temple complex. In general the sūtra repository, if addressed at all, is relegated to the fringes of scholarship, where it remains a minor structure among many major ones, of which Konjiki-dō is now the only survivor.³

The Foucault of madness and the prisons explored the discourse of exclusion as essential to the formulation of a mainstream culture as well as to its critical analysis. There is perhaps no more suitable a methodology for examination of the sūtra repository at Chūson-ji. One needs to ask why the repository is marginal, when it became so, and what such a development entails in historical and social terms. Such questions traverse the sands of meaning, whether postulated for Kiyohira in the twelfth century or for a contemporary historian looking into the past for its modes of representation.

Kiyohira in Ōshū

Kiyohira was a military man.⁴ He was born in 1056, probably at a stockade called Toyota along the middle course of the Kitakami River in the Kitakami River basin. This was the heart of Mutsu and Dewa provinces, or Ōshū 奥州, and home to the liminal Emishi 蝦夷, about whom Nara and Kyoto aristocrats had virtually nothing good to say. Kiyohira’s Fujiwara surname was that of his father Tsunekiyo 経清, a

³ For a study of the sūtra repository see ŌOKA 1971.

⁴ For Kiyohira and his historical context see ITABASHI 1973 and TAKAHASHI 1973.

minor provincial official posted to Mutsu,⁵ but his allegiance was to his mother's family, the Abes of Isawa in Kitakami. This was an old and powerful military clan in Mutsu, with deep ties to its Emishi forebears. After Tsunekiyo was killed in one of the several regional wars that disrupted Ōshū in the eleventh century, Kiyohira's mother married the scion of the Kiyohara 清原 family, a rival interest in Ōshū but of similar stock. Kiyohira grew to manhood among regional warlords regarded as barbarians by their Kyoto contemporaries.⁶

After a series of local wars waged among the Abes, Kiyoharas, and a Minamoto 源 contingent representing the Kyoto government, Kiyohira emerged around 1087 as the ruler of a large Abe-Kiyohara domain in northern Honshū. For the remainder of his life, some forty years, he seems to have been preoccupied with two extended projects. One was the construction of a new capital at Hiraizumi as the seat of an Ōshū Fujiwara domain. The other was the development of a great religious center, in large part as a function of domanical politics, but also as an act of penitence and faith.

Hiraizumi is located at the southern perimeter of the Kitakami Basin on the low plain formed by the confluence of the Kitakami and Koromo Rivers. Kiyohira developed a section along the Kitakami River as Yanagi no Gosho, his residence and governmental base. The city of Hiraizumi grew up around Yanagi no Gosho and flourished there through the autumn of 1189, when expeditionary forces for the armies of Minamoto no Yoritomo arrived to find much of it set afire by fleeing Ōshū Fujiwara retainers defiant in the face of this final colonizing force.⁷

Kiyohira's Temple

A low mountain rises out of the Hiraizumi plain southwest of the old foundations of Yanagi no Gosho. Long before Kiyohira's day the main Ōshū road north—that famous "narrow road" later traveled by poets like Bashō—had passed over this mountain, which was named Kanzan, "Barrier Mountain," after the station at its foot. The northern slope of Kanzan offered, and still does, a fine view northward up the Kitakami Basin. Kiyohira built Chūson-ji along Kanzan's summit. The

⁵ See *Sonpi bunmyaku* 2 (vol. 59), pp. 386–87.

⁶ *Kiyohirakō goganmon*, p. 41; *Mutsu waki*, pp. 22, 26; *Ōshū gosannen ki*, pp. 34, 35.

⁷ *Azuma kagami* 1 (vol. 32), p. 346 (Bunji 5.8.22). For Yanagi no Gosho and the development of Hiraizumi see ŌISHI 1992.

temple straddled the Ōshū road, and, it would seem, bestowed upon this wooded and hilly terrain a sacred mandate for his house and polity.

Soon after moving to Hiraizumi, perhaps sometime in the late 1090's, Kiyohira built a pagoda atop Kanzan near the Ōshū road. With this pagoda as a focal point, he ordered the erection of small reliquaries, each with an image of Amida, at equal distances along the Ōshū road from Shirakawa no Seki (at the southern border of Mutsu in what is now Fukushima Prefecture) to Sotogahama (at Mutsu's northern border, now Aomori Prefecture).⁸ This unusual act, so typical of Ōshū Fujiwara idiosyncrasy, at once delineated the expanse of Kiyohira's domain and signaled an apparent concern with establishing a symbology of holy rule. Chūson-ji began with this first pagoda.

There are numerous obstacles to arriving at a clear picture of Kiyohira's Chūson-ji as it developed from the initial pagoda on Kanzan into the splendid shrine and temple complex that was consecrated in 1126. Most of Chūson-ji's original architecture no longer exists, having been destroyed by fire in 1337 and later. For its reconstruction scholars have relied heavily on two documents, *Bunji no chūmon* 文治の注文 and *Chūson-ji kuyō ganmon* 中尊寺供養願文, and on the results of excavations in and around the complex. The material is riddled with discrepancies and its interpretation has spurred debate, with significant ramifications in the case of the sūtra repository.

The *Chūmon* is a petition filed in 1189 with shogunal authorities by Chūson-ji monks seeking Yoritomo's protection of the temple and its holdings. It is contained in *Azuma kagami* 吾妻鏡 and represents what scholars agree is the most reliable source on the Hiraizumi temples, in large part because its report matches the results of modern excavations.⁹ The text lists the main Hiraizumi temples—Chūson-ji, Mōtsuji, Muryōkō-in—and then describes their principal halls and chapels. Nine important buildings are identified at the forty-structure Chūson-ji complex on Kanzan: the pagoda; a structure called Tahō-ji 多宝寺; a Shaka hall (*shaka-dō* 釈迦堂); a Mandala hall (*ryōkai-dō* 兩界堂); a structure called Daichōju-in 大長寿院; Konjiki-dō; a Tripitaka repository (*issai kyōzō* 一切經藏); and two shrines, Hakusan 白山 and Hi-yoshi 日吉.

The *Ganmon* is the text of a ceremonial address read aloud by Kiyohira at the dedication of an imperial temple, or *gogan-ji* 御願寺, in 1126. The name of the temple in question is not provided in this

⁸ See *Azuma kagami* 1 (vol. 32), p. 353 (Bunji 5.9.17).

⁹ For the *Chūmon* text see *Azuma kagami* 1 (vol. 32), pp. 353–55.

document, which survives only in two later copies in the Chūson-ji archives.¹⁰ Recent scholarship has shown that it may in fact be a pastiche of earlier documents associated with Chūson-ji or other Hirai-zumi temples (SUDŌ and IWASA 1989, pp. 25–29). There are five structures listed in the *Ganmon*, all situated around an artificial pond: a hall measuring three bays on a side, with flanking corridors of twenty-two bays each; three pagodas; a two-storied sūtra repository; and a belfry. It is clear that this complex of buildings differs markedly from that described in the *Chūmon*.

Excavations in and around Chūson-ji and its neighboring temples have yielded material that calls into question the long-standing assumption that the *Ganmon* refers to Chūson-ji. While there is general agreement that the excavated foundations atop Kanzan and their general layout match those of the temple described in 1189 in the *Chūmon*, a complex of the type identified in the *Ganmon* has yet to be unearthed at the Chūson-ji complex. In fact the *Ganmon* seems to represent another temple altogether.

In recent studies of the *Ganmon* both Araki Shinsuke and Sudō Hirotooshi have identified that other temple as Mōtsu-ji, a temple complex traditionally associated with Kiyohira's son Motohira that stands on a flatland several kilometers southeast of Kanzan and Chūson-ji proper (SUDŌ and IWASA 1989, pp. 29–50). This idea has stirred up controversy, for it offers an alternative to the well-established theory, promoted by the architectural historian Fujishima Gaijirō, that the *Ganmon* is not simply a consecratory address but also, and perhaps more importantly, a formal pledge to build yet another precinct on Kanzan.

FUJISHIMA, who headed a series of excavations at Chūson-ji and Mōtsu-ji in the late 1950's and 1960's, published a convincing reconstruction of the initial layout of the Kanzan complex (1969). He argued that work on Chūson-ji went forward in two phases. The main complex, on the summit of Kanzan and in progress there since at least 1100, had been completed by 1126, when the *Ganmon* was read as part of its consecration ceremony. But underway that same year, if not earlier, was another complex, a southern precinct of Chūson-ji at the foot of Kanzan. Fujishima had excavated there the remains of a pond and what could have been a two-storied hall. He hypothesizes

¹⁰ One of the *Ganmon* copies, dated 1329, is by Fujiwara Sukekata; the other, by Kitabatake Akiie, is believed to have been completed around 1336. For the text of the *Ganmon* see *Chūson-ji kyōzō monjo*, pp. 41–42.

that this area was the site of the temple described in the *Ganmon*, upon which construction had been initiated around 1117 when the first fascicles of a vast transcription of the Tripitaka (*issaikyō*) were being copied at the behest of Kiyohira and his wife. This southern precinct, he believes, was never finished, and lapsed into obscurity as work on the other Hiraizumi temples began to take precedence.

Sudō considers this theory flawed by its narrow focus on the Chūson-ji complex as its point of reference. His argument that the *Ganmon* refers to the Mōtsu-ji complex—excavated by Araki in the 1950's—is based on the fact that Mōtsu-ji, with its large pond surrounded by buildings, looks very much indeed like the precinct described in the consecratory address so long thought to refer to Chūson-ji (SUDŌ and IWASA 1989, pp. 41–46). Sudō believes that the monks of Chūson-ji, as part of a strategy to convince Yoritomo that his shogunate would do well by protecting the temple, appropriated from Mōtsu-ji both its prestigious status as a *gogan-ji* and even the very text of its consecration (pp. 45, 49). Thus the temple that Kiyohira had dedicated some sixty years earlier in 1126 was not the Chūson-ji of today, as scholars are too quick to believe. Rather, it included the neighboring precinct later called Mōtsu-ji, which Kiyohira seems to have been intent on building as part of his mandate to rule in Ōshū. This bold reworking of the primary material has profound implications for Chūson-ji's sūtra repository and for the larger framework of Kiyohira's project at Hiraizumi.

Chūson-ji and Mōtsu-ji

Before commenting more thoroughly on the sūtra repository, it is useful to review what Chūson-ji and Mōtsu-ji probably looked like in 1126, when, according to Sudō, the complexes were consecrated.¹¹ Besides the original pagoda, there were six principal structures on Kanzan, bounded by a Hakusan shrine to the north and a Hiyoshi shrine to the south. Most of these buildings have been thoroughly studied in the secondary literature. First to have been built, in 1105,¹²

¹¹ The following descriptions of chapels and their interiors are based on the *Chūmon* and *Ganmon* texts and on excavation data reported in FUJISHIMA 1961, 1971, 1983 and ŌISHI 1992.

¹² Dates of construction, when available, are based on two later reports included in *Chūson-ji kyōzō monjo*, namely, *Shōwa ninen taishū sojō* 正和二年大衆訴状, submitted to shogunal authorities in 1313, and *Kenmu gannen taishū sojō* 健武元年大衆訴状, dated 1336. See *Chūson-ji kyōzō monjo*, pp. 50–51, 53–56.

was Tahō-ji, which enshrined sculptures of Shaka and Tahō and stood across the road from Chūson-ji's pagoda. The Mandala hall, filled with hundreds of icons representing the deities of the Kongōkai 金剛界 and Taizōkai 胎藏界 mandalas, had been completed shortly thereafter.¹³ In 1107, not far from the pagoda and Tahō-ji, the two-storied building called Daichōju-in had gone up on a section of Kanzan that overlooks the Koromo and Kitakami rivers. Some fifteen meters from podium to ridgepole and measuring thirty-five meters on its longitudinal axis, Daichōju-in housed ten colossal golden sculptures of Amida. By 1108 work had been completed on Chūson-ji's main building, a Shaka hall containing over one hundred golden images of Shaka and situated about ninety meters south of Daichōju-in, at the center of the Kanzan complex. To the southwest of the Shaka hall, at a distance of about sixty meters, stood Konjiki-dō. It had been completed in 1124, as inscribed on its memorial roof placard, and,¹⁴ "gold all over, top to bottom," it housed three daises decorated in mother-of-pearl; atop each was an Amida triad, six figures of Jizō, and two guardian images. Elsewhere¹⁵ at the complex was a Tripitaka repository, about which there is virtually no information, aside from the *Chūmon* notation that it contained a Sung Chinese "book" (*sōhon* 宋本) of the Buddhist canon.

On the basis of the *Ganmon* description, Mōtsu-ji around 1126 appears to have consisted of six structures around a large artificial pond. The principal building was a three-bay-square Shaka hall, about thirty meters on a side, that housed a golden Shaka triad. Nearby were a two-storied belfry and three pagodas with images of Shaka, Rushana, Yakushi, and Miroku. The complex also contained a two-storied sūtra repository with a life-size image of Monju and a votive sūtra transcription of the *issaikyō* rendered in gold and silver script. This Mōtsu-ji complex bears little relationship to the one described in 1189 in the *Chūmon*¹⁶ because it was expanded during the regimes of

¹³ The exact sites of the pagoda, Tahō-ji, and the Mandala hall have yet to be determined. However, see FUJISHIMA 1983, pp. 73–84 for the pagoda and Tahō-ji on Kanzan's summit.

¹⁴ See FUJISHIMA 1971, p. 209 for a reproduction of the placard.

¹⁵ In the *Chūmon* the Tripitaka repository is listed separately from the other main buildings on Kanzan. Although the text remains unclear, it does suggest that there may have been two compounds on Kanzan, one bordered by the Hakusan and Hiyoshi shrines and containing the six main buildings of Chūson-ji, and one containing a Tripitaka repository.

¹⁶ In 1189 Mōtsu-ji was described as having at least three distinct precincts—Enryū-ji 円隆寺, Kashō-ji 嘉勝寺, Kanjizaiō-in 観自在王院—around artificial ponds. Each contained numerous subsidiary structures. See *Azuma kagami*, pp. 353–54.

Kiyohira's successors, Motohira and Hidehira (FUJISHIMA 1971, pp. 193–96). There is also evidence that the initial Mōtsu-ji complex was destroyed by fire sometime not long after its consecration (SUDŌ and IWASA 1989, pp. 45, 53), perhaps during the internecine skirmishes that marked Motohira's rise to power after his father's death.¹⁷

Only two buildings have survived the centuries since 1126. They stand not thirty meters apart on the southwestern periphery of what was once the Kanzan main complex, which had burned to the ground by the end of the fourteenth century. One is the famous and well-studied Konjiki-dō (SUDŌ 1989; KANNO 1988; YIENGRUKSAWAN 1993). The other is the nondescript sūtra repository that seems to have escaped direct mention in Chūson-ji's earliest records. Although the two buildings appear chronologically and structurally linked, they are not examined as a pair. In a sense they are like fraternal twins whose kinship was forgotten as history was written.

Konjiki-dō is situated on a gentle slope at the edge of a grove of pine trees. It looks as it must have in 1124: a small square building with a pyramidal shingled roof over a single story, covered inside and out in gold leaf, with walls not five meters on a side and containing a multitude of small gilt-wood images. On its three daises are sculptures of Amida and his attendants; within them are the mummies of Kiyohira, Motohira, and Hidehira.

Standing nearby is the sūtra repository. It is a slightly larger version of Konjiki-dō, but without the golden walls and by comparison drab in appearance. It measures about eight meters square and, like Konjiki-dō, supports a shingled pyramidal roof over a single story. The repository is believed to have been built in 1122,¹⁸ although some have found its placement so odd as to indicate a much later date, perhaps toward the middle of the thirteenth century (SUDŌ and IWASA 1989, pp. 61–62). Inside the repository is its principal object of worship, a Monju pentad in gilt wood. The original altar, stylistically and technically similar to that in Konjiki-dō, has been removed to Chūson-ji's museum. Three of the repository's walls are equipped with shelving for lacquered sūtra boxes. Until 1955, when the Chūson-ji museum was built, these shelves and an array of boxes in front of them held the remnants of the several Tripitaka transcriptions, one a printed version from Sung China, for which Kiyohira and his heirs

¹⁷ *Chōshūki* 1 (vol. 16), p. 315 (Daiji 4.8.21); and 2 (vol. 17), p. 15 (Daiji 5.6.8).

¹⁸ The date is based on an inscription on a roof placard unearthed near the repository site and deciphered through infrared imaging.

are celebrated.

Unlike Konjiki-dō, which corresponds more or less exactly to its description in the *Chūmon*, the sūtra repository seems free of any textual reference. There is no evidence that it was once a building of two stories, as described in the *Ganmon*, nor that it was transferred to its present location within the core Kanzan complex from some original site elsewhere on Kanzan or at Mōtsu-ji, as might be expected were it indeed the repository mentioned in both the *Chūmon* and the *Ganmon*. That it contains a Monju figure, and once housed a collection of Tripitakas, is no proof that it is the Tripitaka hall of the *Ganmon*, for such articles are notoriously peripatetic. The sūtra repository thus remains a building without a pedigree at a place where most structures have one. The lack of scholarly interest in the repository is not altogether surprising, then, for nothing about it is certain. But such lack of concern at an otherwise notably well-documented complex, and the repository's stubbornly inexplicable presence so close to Konjiki-dō, seem indicative of an order of meaning at Kiyohira's Chūson-ji that invites further exploration and comment.

Temple and Mandate

Kiyohira's temple consecration of 1126 seems to have been a splendid affair, to which the words of the *Ganmon* bear witness. The officiating priests were from the Enryaku-ji complex on Mt Hiei. A thousand monks chanted and recited sūtras as the smoke of incense rose to the sky. For use during these recitations, and as an act of merit, Kiyohira had commissioned two sumptuous votive sūtra transcriptions in costly materials, one a rendering of the Tripitaka, the other of the *Lotus Sūtra (Hokekyō)* in a thousand copies. During the ceremony Kiyohira read aloud a consecration speech written for him by the Kyoto notable Fujiwara no Atsumitsu. In it he gave his reasons for building a "great monastery for the protection of the nation" (*chingo kokka dai garan* 鎮護國家大伽藍) and his hopes at its completion, saying, in effect: "I dedicate this monastery to make amends for aḥ who have suffered and died in the Ōshū wars, that their souls may be at rest in the next world. I honor my barbarian forebears. I offer this holy place as a legacy, to bring Buddhism to my domain, and to pray for harmony in Ōshū and throughout the nation. I dedicate it to my monarchs, for their health and prosperity.¹⁹ Today, after years of tribulation, I

¹⁹ The monarchs referred to are Shirakawa (the senior retired emperor, or Hōō), Toba

have found peace.”²⁰

These sentiments are laudable and convincing. But it is also true that words tell more than one story. Kiyohira, a warlord living in a Buddhist *epistème*, knows that every religion has a territory,²¹ and so in his speech there inevitably resides a tactic for political and social control. Just as Hiraizumi and the rooms at Yanagi no Gosho were in a sense a geopolitical vortex in Ōshū, so Kiyohira’s temples might be said to have constituted its religious fulcrum, where the sacred and the polity met, and where a language of legitimation was formulated. For Kiyohira had not risen to power in peace. When he inherited the Ōshū domain in 1087, he had seen at least ten years of war in a region with a reputation not unlike that of the American Wild West, as TAKAHASHI Tomio has noted (1979, pp. 19–20). By 1126 his lands were quiet, but surely he knew of the Minamoto claim that Ōshū belonged to the family of his rivals, Yoriyoshi and Yoshiie—a claim that eventually would drive Yoritomo to send an army to Hiraizumi in the 1180’s (ITABASHI 1973, pp. 123–25).

Kiyohira had already begun to construct a symbology of rule at Chūson-ji with his first pagoda on Kanzan.²² A stream of reliquaries spread north and south like goodness emanating from the Buddha, represented in absolute form by that pagoda. To this program of mandate Kiyohira, a man no doubt educated by the Tendai monks who were his close relatives,²³ applied the generative religious interface of his day. The *Lotus Sūtra* and Pure Land scriptures²⁴ frame nearly all aspects of Kiyohira’s project at Chūson-ji and Mōtsu-ji, and they are its ideological mainstay.

Tahō-ji, the first chapel built at Chūson-ji, almost certainly was a pagoda of the type known as a *tahō-tō* 多宝塔, a “stūpa of manifold treasures,” with a cylindrical format and pyramidal roof over a single story. Its figures of Shaka and Tahō indicate a scriptural and iconographical basis in the eleventh chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, where Tahō bears witness to Shaka’s teachings. Tahō-ji’s proximity to the Ōshū road, as well as its apparent centrality to the Kanzan complex, seem

(the junior retired emperor, or Jōō), Sutoku (the reigning emperor), and Taikenmon’in (Toba’s empress).

²⁰ *Kiyohirakō goganmon*, p. 42.

²¹ I am grateful to Raoul Birnbaum for this image.

²² For a study of religion and mandate at the Hiraizumi temples see ISHIDA 1964.

²³ *Mutsu waki*, pp. 24, 27, 31, 32.

²⁴ In particular the *Muryōjūkyō* 無量壽經 (T #360, 12.265–279) and *Kanmuryōjūkyō* 觀無量壽經 (T #365, 12.340–346).

to reflect Kiyohira's desire to place the ineluctable truth of the *Lotus Sūtra* at the heart of his tenure, and anchor it there like a cork in the trying times predicted by Shaka in the sūtra's eleventh chapter.²⁵ Daichōju-in, built several years later to tower above the surrounding forest, is a similar statement, but with the purifying golden light of Amida as the vehicle of unification,²⁶ signaling from afar the benevolence of the Ōshū Fujiwara regime.

Mandate, temple, and polity, a symbology, even a semiotics of holy rule: these presuppose an arena of exchange, a forum, where, as Carlo Ginzburg has written, the regimes of political and religious knowledge intersect (GINZBURG 1992, pp. 63, 69). In a sense Kiyohira's consecration speech is about the public face of his temple projects and how he is refracted in them, through them, to friend and foe alike. It is an act of rationalization by a man who had fought his way to power and who, regardless of the tone of the *Ganmon* as it celebrates the Kyoto monarchy, remained a northerner with barbarian roots—in short, a savage.

Such circumstances predict an underside to the public displays at Chūson-ji and as recorded in the *Ganmon*. And indeed another side does exist, camouflaged but hardly inaccessible, in the realm of the unremarked. It is here that the power of the *Lotus* and Amida are brought to bear in the ordinary, intimate concerns of an aging warlord, and where the juxtaposition of an unassuming sūtra repository with resplendent Konjiki-dō is not an accident of history, but rather the manifestation of mortal hopes and fears.

A Private Matter

Konjiki-dō is a puzzling building. It looks like a gold box and conforms to nothing in the mainstream canon. Iconographically it seems to be an Amida hall (*amida-dō* 阿弥陀堂), but it is also a tomb and was clearly designed as such. Sealed in gilt-wood caskets inside its altar, not below in the ground, are the three mummies of Kiyohira, his son Motohira, and his grandson Hidehira. Scholars get rather exercised about this, for the mummies are thought to constitute a pollution. Konjiki-dō is the only known instance in which dead people share a ritual space with Amida. Some have suggested that Konjiki-dō is a mausoleum and that it was never meant to be used as an Amida hall

²⁵ *Myōhō renge kyō* [*Lotus Sūtra*], T #262, 9.33c, 34b, 35a.

²⁶ *Muryōjūkyō*, T 12.270a; *Kanmuryōjūkyō*, T 12.343b.

at all. Certainly it resembles another class of buildings—small and square in format—that through the twelfth century were used for burials. Such buildings were customarily placed on the periphery of the main complex of a temple and include the *tamadono* 靈殿, or “spirit hall,” and the *hokke-dō* 法華堂, or “Lotus hall” (much better known, and misleadingly so, as a site for prayerful meditations on the *Lotus Sūtra*; HINO 1979, pp. 157–60).

A reasonable strategy of interpretation is perhaps to leave Konjiki-dō as a conflation, which is entirely consistent with the Ōshū Fujiwara phenomenon in history, where nothing is what it seems. Possibly Kiyohira, nearing seventy years of age when he built the hall at the edge of his Kanzan complex, planned to pray there and make merit for what was left of his life. Perhaps Kiyohira hoped to die at Konjiki-dō while calling on Amida, as Fujiwara no Michinaga had done at Muryōju-in a hundred years earlier in 1027.²⁷ It is difficult to imagine that Kiyohira did not know that he would be laid to rest in paradisaical Konjiki-dō, whose altar was built to contain a casket, and which so obviously conforms to the grave-house format of the *tamadono* and *hokkedō* types.²⁸

Thus Konjiki-dō, a place to die but also a kind of pure land, is situated in a grove of trees on the periphery of the Kanzan complex. As such it is an intensely private place and of an order altogether different from that of halls like Tahō-ji and Daichōju-in. For surely there is no concern more intimate, more terrifyingly nonpublic, than the prospect of death. It is in this context that Chūson-ji’s nondescript sūtra repository takes on a poignant but also powerful meaning.

In 1126 Kiyohira dedicated more than 13,000 fascicles of sūtra transcriptions as part of the consecration of his great temple. Of these at least 5,300 comprised a Tripitaka in gold and silver script on indigo-dyed paper.²⁹ Some 8,000 fascicles resulted from a gold transcription of the *Lotus Sūtra* in a thousand sets, also on indigo-dyed paper. The whereabouts of the Tripitaka in gold and silver is well doc-

²⁷ *Eiga monogatari* 栄花物語, McCULLOUGH 1980, vol. 2, pp. 762–66.

²⁸ Both Shirakawa and Toba carefully planned their own funerals and the buildings that would house their remains. See *Chōshūki* 1 (vol. 16), p. 300 (Daiji 4.7.16), and *Taiki* 台記 1 (vol. 23), p. 167 (Ten’yō 2.12.17).

²⁹ According to Izutsu Nobutaka and others, Kiyohira’s Tripitaka was underway by 1117, when colophons indicate its commissioning by Kiyohira and his Taira wife, and continued through the early 1120’s, when it appears to have been merged with another extensive transcription of the *Kegon-gyō*. The text was based on a Tripitaka at the Kamo Shrine that had been brought from China by Chōnen in 987. See IZUTSU 1990, p. 23 and SUGIYAMA 1990.

umented after 1126; that of the gold *Lotus Sūtra* is unknown.

Until recently most scholars assumed that the Tripitaka, popularly called the *Kiyohira-kyō* 清衡經, was enshrined in a Tripitaka hall at the Kanzan complex, perhaps the one mentioned in the *Chūmon*, or possibly that postulated by Fujishima for Kanzan's southern precinct. But there is reason to believe that the Tripitaka was at first placed within neighboring Mōtsu-ji, as Sudō has suggested. Convinced that a Tripitaka of such lavish type could only have been produced for a *gogan-ji* of the type described in the *Ganmon*, and ready to identify that *gogan-ji* as Mōtsu-ji, Sudō argues that Kiyohira's Tripitaka was commissioned specifically for the Mōtsu-ji complex (SUDŌ and IWASA 1989, pp. 54–55).

Once the Mōtsu-ji complex had been destroyed by fire, perhaps in the early 1130's, the Tripitaka was removed to Chūson-ji and installed in the repository later mentioned in the *Chūmon* (SUDŌ and IWASA 1989, p. 59). A possible location for this apparently outlying repository is Kanzan's southern precinct, where Fujishima unearthed the remains of the Tripitaka hall, identified by him as the first structure of his hypothesized second, post-1117 stage in Chūson-ji's development (FUJISHIMA 1971, pp. 190–91). By the time that Hideyoshi had most of the gold-and-silver Tripitaka stolen from Chūson-ji shortly before his death in 1598, it was kept, along with a Monju pentad, in the sūtra repository next to Konjiki-dō.

The *Lotus Sūtra* transcriptions virtually dropped from sight once the consecration ceremony had ended. There is no record of their location at Chūson-ji or Mōtsu-ji, and temple documents do not refer to them after 1126. Only a hundred fascicles survive at Chūson-ji. Certainly scholars like Sudō are correct in emphasizing the high priority of the fabulously sumptuous Tripitaka in gold and silver, "the only one of its kind in East Asia" (SUDŌ and IWASA 1989, p. 135). There is no question that it would have played a major role in a display of mandated rule, being in fact a very expensive receptacle of the all-encompassing Dharma. But the *Lotus Sūtra* was no mean endeavor, with its eight thousand fascicles written out in gold script. What happened to those many fascicles, and how is it that they so completely disappeared at a temple justifiably noted for its preservation of treasures? The silence is intriguing and not unlike the one surrounding the sūtra repository near Konjiki-dō. This very silence may indicate that these seemingly negligible products of Kiyohira's project at Hiraizumi are deserving of scrutiny. Is it possible that, after 1126, the *Lotus Sūtra* in gold was enshrined in this repository?

That the *Lotus Sūtra* was of personal importance to Kiyohira seems evident from the prominence of Tahō-ji at Chūson-ji. The norm in Kiyohira's day, as seen at Shirakawa's Hosshō-ji of 1077, was to begin a temple of Chūson-ji's scale, not with a *tahō-tō*, but with a Shaka or Amida hall accompanied by one or more multistoried pagodas (SUGIYAMA 1962, pp. 56-58). Yet Kiyohira, his pagoda in place, began the Kanzan complex with a hall and a pair of sculptures based exclusively on the *Lotus Sūtra*. Familiarity with the sūtra's teachings is also apparent in the *Ganmon*, where Kiyohira pledges a grand temple and thus hopes to atone for a lifetime of sins and shortcomings.³⁰ Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, could Kiyohira not have been aware of the prophylactic significance of the sūtra, which, in its inimitably militant way, promises to forever protect those who would honor it?³¹ Supposing that Kiyohira believed in this power, what better place to enshrine one thousand copies of the *Lotus Sūtra* than next to his tomb?

By the early 1120's, when Konjiki-dō and the sūtra repository were being constructed together in their own precinct on the southern edge of the Kanzan complex, the *Lotus Sūtra* had taken on a funerary modality, as any Heian courtier's diary will attest. Transcriptions were frequently proffered at funerals and as memorial gifts to be placed in or over graves.³² Lotus meditation halls were often used as tombs, as noted, and in such circumstances seem to have been associated in particular with women's religious praxis (NISHIGUCHI 1987, pp. 79-99; YIENGRUKSAWAN 1993, pp. 43-44). Elsewhere it has been suggested that the women of Kiyohira's immediate family, unusually prominent as associate sponsors of Konjiki-dō, oversaw the mummification and disposal of his body (YIENGRUKSAWAN 1993, pp. 46, 49). In the sūtra repository next to Kiyohira's tomb perhaps they also tended to a vast transcription of the *Lotus Sūtra*, placed there to protect his soul and the mausoleum in which its shell lay hidden.

It is astonishing that virtually no one has addressed the problem posed by the seemingly obvious juxtaposition of the sūtra repository and Konjiki-dō in what appears to be a mortuary complex within the greater Kanzan complex.³³ That the repository became a Tripitaka

³⁰ *Kiyohirakō goganmon*, p. 41.

³¹ See in particular the tenth, seventeenth, twenty-third, and twenty-eighth chapters.

³² See *Chōshūki* 1 (vol. 16), p. 98 (Ten'ei 4.2.22); *Chūyūki* 7 (vol. 15), p. 51 (Chōshō 2.7.3); *Denryaku* 12, part 4, p. 182 (Eikyū 3.9.16); *Eishōki*, p. 218 (Daiji 4.7.30).

³³ KAMEDA Tsutomu (1969) has explored the idea that the sūtra repository and Konjiki-

hall by default, its contents possibly removed to make room for the Tripitaka and other articles brought in from elsewhere at Chūson-ji or Mōtsu-ji, seems a function of the evasive strategy by which Konjiki-dō and its sūtra hall appear to have been separated and reinvented as unrelated structures.

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Heterogeneous reality, Georges Bataille wrote, undermines the laws of social homogeneity. Its impact is that of an electrical charge, “a force or shock” that cannot be assimilated in discourses posited on a “homogeneity of phenomena,” as in science or the writing of social history. Heterogeneous elements thus “find themselves subjected to a *de facto* censorship.” Ultimately this makes them as powerful and disconcerting, as startling, as the dream image when brought to analysis (BATAILLE 1933, pp. 141, 143).

Bataille’s model is useful in addressing the sūtra repository at Chūson-ji and its peripheral status. Like something from the unconscious, the repository has disturbing implications in a world of scholarship that cherishes homologues and the rhetoric of unitary interpretations. In its juxtaposition with Konjiki-dō, the repository introduces elements that, akin to the scary monsters in David Bowie’s song,³⁴ disrupt as they rise to consciousness. Among them are the pressure of the idiosyncratic straining against norms, and a terror of the powerless. In Japan, where the ideological drive toward homogeneity and control is a real and pervasive force, these are frightening concepts.

The sūtra repository with Konjiki-dō constitutes on many levels an isolation, even an extreme on the edge of the Kanzan complex. The disinterest of scholars is also extreme, but functionally related to the liminal status of Konjiki-dō and the sūtra repository as a compound. For the buildings seem to mark the locus of an adaptation, where public and mainstream configurations, specifically those associated with the *Lotus Sūtra* and its system of worship, were in a sense downloaded to the idiomatic personal matrix of a local chieftain contemplating death. Such an adaptation, idiosyncratic and unique, perhaps found its motivation in that very contemplation. For Kiyohira, when

dō marked a “golden realm” on Kanzan that was based in part on worship associated with legendary Wutai-shan 五台山 in China.

³⁴ “Scary monsters super creeps keep me running scared,” from the song “Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps),” copyright Tintoretto Music (BMI), 1980, 1992.

the fortress of the ego no longer sufficed, nor opulent displays of power at a grand temple, perhaps it was only the *Lotus Sūtra* that, ever protective of its faithful, could offer succor in the face of an ultimate and annihilating vulnerability represented by the prospect of his own death.

There are lessons to be drawn from Chūson-ji's nondescript sūtra repository that bear on the nature and function of the historical process. In a nonentity from the past are contained the elements of a heterogeneity of profound implication. Kiyohira's repository, like Konjiki-dō, is in many senses representative of strategies for managing the unknowable, specifically death, but also the adamantine weaknesses that lie at the heart of subjective experience, for which nothing, not even kingship or power over men, is an antidote. Scholars traditionally have had little use for the vulnerable and the powerless, for those untold yet telling exceptions that buttress the various superstructures of knowledge. In many discourses such elements are simply deleted. But is it not the true task of the historian, in seeking the past and not some deeper textualization of it, to look for something real, which inevitably resists and subverts symbolizations? Perhaps it is in this sense that the sūtra repository at Chūson-ji, in its very ordinariness, generates meaning.

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