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Miracles of Book and Body

BUDDHIST TEXTUAL CULTURE AND MEDIEVAL JAPAN

Charlotte Eubanks



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*In memory of my brother
John
May you be peaceful and at ease*

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The Nanzan Institute and the Johns Hopkins University Press have kindly granted permission to reprint parts of this book that were first printed in their publications. A portion of chapter 4 originally appeared in the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, and a version of the conclusion was first printed in the pages of *Book History*.

A few personal notes of thanks to those who are last in print but first in my heart: to my family, who first taught me to care about sacred words, and to my partner Etta, whose reserves of strength are astounding, and who brings joy and wonder to every day.

Introduction

The Cult of the Book and the Culture of Text

SOMETIME IN THE LATE 1190s the Japanese Buddhist monk Myōe (1173–1232) decided that a shaved head was not a reliable enough symbol of a person's devotion or true intentions. Thus, as a sign of his sincerity, he picked up a dagger and sawed off his right ear, spattering blood over the various ritual implements arrayed before him. According to his disciple Kikai, Myōe's logic in choosing to cut off his ear was as follows: "If he plucked out an eye, he would grieve over not being able to see the scriptures. If he cut off his nose, snot would dribble on the scriptures. If he severed a hand, he would be in agony over forming the mudras. But if he cut off an ear, he would still be able to hear."¹ Myōe's guiding logic in choosing which portion of his body to damage pivoted on the material reality of his physical access to the sutras: seeing them, holding them, keeping them clean, and hearing them.

By marking himself in such a drastic way, Myōe hoped to accomplish two things. First, he wanted his permanent, though intangible, internal commitments reflected on the external reality of his physical body, available for all to see for as long as his body should last. Second, he believed that by altering his physicality in such a painful way, he might also be able to alter the sacred writings of Buddhism. He believed profoundly, perhaps even fanatically, in a correlation between body and text. Following the incident, Myōe avidly and repeatedly searched the Buddhist sutras, looking for lists of beings in attendance at the historical Buddha's sermons and hoping to find his name recorded there.

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In other words, Myōe believed that his sacrificial act may have accomplished a feat of textual transubstantiation and that he might find his name forcibly inserted into the sutras he so diligently studied, as if severing his ear could suture his name. Significantly, after dismembering himself, Myōe had a dream in which an Indian priest came to him, verbally acknowledged his chosen marking as the act of a bodhisattva, and then gave him two pieces of paper with seals attesting to the merit of his deed. In a way, Myōe finally got what he wanted: written proof that the Buddha recognized him, individually and by name, as a worthy disciple.²

Myōe's story suggests an intense interest in the correlation between devotional body and sacred text in medieval Japan. His narrative underscores the importance of excavating a sense of Buddhist textual culture as a crucial tool for understanding Buddhism's incredible spread from India throughout South and East Asia to Japan and, once on the archipelago, its permeation of Japanese culture between the ninth and thirteenth centuries. While Myōe's act was indeed an extreme one, his performance of excess resonates deeply with, and draws its inspiration from, persistent Buddhist ideas about the status of the physical body, the efficacy of the sutras, and the power of devotion to compose and recompose the human frame. These ideas are ingrained at the level of the sentence, the phrase, and the word, observable in rhetorical patterns that Buddhist scriptures (sutras) and various sutra-inspired literary genres frequently echo and elaborate. Some of the most common figures that this study explores include the notion that the body is a vessel that may be filled either with purity or with filth, the trope that suggests that remembering something is analogous to holding it in the hands, the equation of sacred text with bodily relic, and the concept that a paradigmatic act of reading involves centripetal movement around the text, spinning around the sutra like stars around a pole rather than "skimming" over its surface like a rock skipped across water. My aim is to identify and explore formal aspects of Buddhist rhetoric that are particularly tenacious—persisting across linguistic, temporal, geographical, and generic bounds—and that can therefore speak more generally to Mahāyāna Buddhist notions of the power and presence of the written word.

At its heart, this book is about trying to understand how a Japanese monk at the end of the twelfth century could strike upon the fascinating conviction that cutting off his ear might miraculously rewrite scripture. To speak in more expansive terms, however, this book is also an examination of the imaginative life of sacred text, seeking to answer questions about how Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures imagine themselves to work as literary narratives, and about how

these ideas get taken up in the popular imagination, for instance, in miracle tales attesting to the efficacy and power of sutras. While extreme, Myōe's act was not an aberration. Myōe, after all, was neither the first religious figure, nor the only one of his time, to act on a deeply held belief that moments and habits of devotional intensity could bridge human body and sacred text, pointing to them not as discrete from one another but rather as nodes along a shared material continuum. This book will introduce many of these people, some decidedly "real" in the historical sense—Kūkai (774–835), Chōgen (1126–1203), Dōgen (1200–1253), and Nichiren (1222–82), for instance—some clearly literary Everymen—the chanting hermit, the Unbelieving Man—and yet others who represent fanciful composites of the real and the ideal.

By exploring the texture of Buddhist language about textuality—reading it closely for patterns and resonance, describing it "thickly" in the context of a specific medieval genre (*setsuwa*, or "explanatory tales"), examining how it informs ritual action—this study documents the various ways in which characters (whether historical or fictional) in medieval narratives responded to the urgings of figurative language, often literalizing that rhetoric in the specificities of their practice. For instance, a medieval copyist might respond to scriptural assertions of a golden-skinned buddha by writing the word "buddha" in gold ink every time he encounters it in the sutra he is reproducing.

My interest, then, is in the "form" of Buddhist texts, in both senses of the word. On the one hand, this study ponders the formal elements of Buddhist literature (primarily sutras and *setsuwa*) looking for the rhetorical logic crystallized in the elements of metaphor, metonym, tone, and synecdoche and tracing the implications of narrative strategies, including metafictional gestures in which the text reaches beyond itself to include the reader as character. On the other hand, this study is also concerned with the concrete forms that these figurative, literary gestures engender, including a range of calligraphic practices (gilded sutras, sutra text in the shape of stupas, etc.), as well as various material formats for text such as the scroll, the booklet, the CD, and the sutra library. The flow of this book reflects this methodology. Early chapters begin by reading widely in a given genre (sutra or *setsuwa*) to identify figurative patterns and to uncover how those genres work on the level of language. Later chapters then closely explore specific literary passages that take up, amplify, transmit, or redirect those patterns before ultimately examining instances in which the figurative patterns erupt into the material world. In this way I chart the trajectory of what Gregory Schopen has called the Mahāyānic "cult of the book" as it takes shape in medieval Japan.³

TEXTUAL CULTURE

If, as Schopen and others have argued, Mahāyāna Buddhism (as imagined in the pages of sutras and as practiced in much of East Asia) can be characterized as a “cult of the book,” then it behooves us to pay close attention to the specific language those books (the sutras) employ, the material formats in which their devotees may encounter them, and the particular ways in which these linguistic and material aspects signify as they travel across continents, centuries, and tongues. These are precisely the types of query that studies of textual culture seek to answer. By “textual culture” I mean to indicate three interrelated lines of inquiry. On the linguistic level, textual culture refers to the particular rhetorical tools by which a text or set of related texts (here, Mahāyāna sutras and the Japanese miracle tales they inspire) seeks to shape the conditions of its own reception and reproduction. These tools may include direct commands that the text makes of its readers, promises it resolves for those who treat it properly, and threats made against those who would defame it. More subtly, a text may employ narrative flow and figurative language to guide its readers into a position of receptivity and engagement. On the material level, textual culture speaks to the various forms that text assumes in a given time and place (here, medieval Japan), including techniques of calligraphy and illumination, for instance, or a choice between types of container such as scroll, booklet, or codex. On the level of performance, textual culture concerns the conventions, techniques, and practices that people utilized (or imagined utilizing) to engage with texts. In our case, these include reading, chanting, circumambulation, memorization, and the giving of offerings.

Although Japanese scholars have recently begun to explore questions of textual culture, their work primarily concerns developments dating to the Tokugawa period (1600–1868) or later.⁴ Likewise, a number of Western-trained scholars have produced several masterful studies of Chinese and Japanese print culture, but these, too, tend to deal mostly with the early modern period.⁵ One of the major contributions of this book, then, is that it seeks to extend our understanding of textual culture back into the premodern period. In this endeavor, I draw on a full range of textual studies scholarship, a field that has developed largely out of the interaction between modern bibliographical studies (the thought processes undergirding the creation of critical editions) and the thorny realities of medieval European texts. As developed in this realm, the scholarship of textual culture weaves itself from three main strands: the history of the book, the sociology of text, and the ontology of the written word.

Historians of the book⁶ seek to understand when and how major revolutions in the material form of written knowledge occurred and to describe the cultural impacts of those material changes. Motivated especially by the turn to digital and virtual media, these scholars historicize this contemporary revolution with respect to the two most recent major switches in bookish materiality: the move from the rolled scroll to the bound codex, and the move from the manuscript to the printed book. Because revolutions in European book culture frequently link to the rise of a literary vernacular, histories of the book often function simultaneously as national histories.⁷

A second angle onto textual culture has developed out of theoretical concerns adhering to the production of critical editions.⁸ Scholarship on the “textual condition” or the “sociology of text,” as this field is sometimes called, focuses on the production of literary texts and particularly on the instability of the material text as it undergoes changes in format, punctuation, page layout, page breaks, illustration or illumination, paper quality, size, shape, and so forth. By focusing attention on these details and the social conditions that give rise to their appearance and interpretation, this line of study attempts to understand the ways in which “a ‘text’ is not a ‘material thing’ but a material event or set of events, a point in time (or a moment in space) where certain communicative interchanges are being practiced.”⁹

Finally, a third approach to textual culture inquires into the “ontological status” of literature,¹⁰ the problematic locale of which can be easily apprehended by considering the prototypical question “If the *Mona Lisa* is in the Louvre, where are *Hamlet* and *Lycidas*? What is the essential physical basis of a literary work of art?”¹¹ In other words, a sculpture consists of stone, and a painting consists of canvas and pigment, whereas a poem does not consist (or does not consist only) of any single instance of black ink on white paper. Part of the issue is that a work of literature typically exists in multiple copies and variants in a way that sculptures and most paintings do not.¹² In addition, a poem may exist in other registers that are independent of material form (for instance, a memorized poem or a poem that exists only in the moments of its oral performance).

What each of these realms of inquiry shares is an attention to the relationship between the language of a text (its “linguistic code,” the literary tropes it employs), the material form of a text (its “bibliographic code” of ink color, paper quality, etc.), and the way these two factors combine in social, ritual, or liturgical contexts to produce meaning. In the course of this book, I make several innovations into these theoretical concerns. First, by attempting to explore not Japanese textual culture but *Buddhist* textual culture (primarily as

articulated in Japan, a cultural inheritor of Indic and Sinic practices), this book attempts to think about textual culture as an enterprise that exists before, beyond, and between nation.¹³ To that end, my arguments pursue a transnational, transcultural, diasporic notion of textual culture and practice that privileges modes of spiritual engagement over and above those of national identity and language. In this way, I seek to understand the “mystery of the Sacred Word”¹⁴ in tandem with an appreciation of how that mystery might be parsed into written letters (whether Chinese or Japanese), intellectual sense, and the full range of embodied sensual engagement that constitutes faith.

Second, while “textual condition” scholarship focuses critical attention on modern works of literature (primarily poetry), the ideas generated by this field of inquiry suggest interesting approaches that can be brought into dialogue with anthropological and performance-based models of communication,¹⁵ both of which afford a better purchase on textual conditions and traditions that diverge from modernist high literary aesthetics. This book brings anthropological, performance-based, and textual approaches into conversation with one another, manipulating, changing, and extending them as necessary, in order to consider religious text as a species of the literary that coheres at the nexus of ritual, liturgy, and the aesthetic.

Third, studies of the “ontology” of text likewise have typically focused on certain kinds of literature, most often poetry and, more specifically, poetry composed in the heavily Christian cultures of Europe and North America. In this book, I think through the notion of textual ontology in a Buddhist context. I devote one chapter (the first) exclusively to parsing the ontological status of sutras, and later chapters proceed by examining practices of sutra memorization, chanting, and copying in order to illustrate the ways in which Buddhism posits the voice as a “musical shuttle” (to borrow a term from Walt Whitman) that has the power to weave together the page and the embodied mind as interpenetrating locales for the inscription of sacred text.¹⁶ Thus, I argue that, in addition to the page, one of the other places a sutra may be said to “exist” is in human memory.

Finally, this book negotiates the tension between what David Kaston has called the “platonic” and the “pragmatic” views of textuality, the former of which concerns the work as transcendent of all material forms and the latter of which scrutinizes a text as always associated with specific material iterations (paper, ink, binding, etc.).¹⁷ While, platonically speaking, a text is not commensurate with any one of its material forms and therefore exists in a world apart, practically speaking, in order to be seen or heard, it must manifest as a material object. The coming chapters begin with a more platonically inflected

approach: How do Mahāyāna sutras ask to be read? How do they seek to direct and shape the ways in which their devotees encounter them? What literary tools do sutras employ to insist on their existence beyond the written page? But even these more abstract questions quickly point to evidence of textual anxiety—what Roger Chartier has called the “fear of obliteration”¹⁸—which can only speak to an awareness of the transience and mutability of material forms, of text as embodied in particular material objects. Sutras worry about being burned, forgotten, excerpted and abridged, appropriated by other religious groups, and so forth. Thus, this study becomes increasingly concerned with the “pragmatic” aspects of textual experience, exploring the ways in which medieval sermons establish texts (particularly didactic texts such as sutras and, to an extent, *setsuwa*) as acting on, in, and as bodies.

SUTRAS THROUGH *SETSUWA*

My primary source for speaking about Buddhist textual culture in medieval Japan is the genre of *setsuwa* (literally “explanatory tales”). Often used in sermons to illustrate points of doctrine, *setsuwa* were also compiled into a number of literary collections between the ninth and thirteenth centuries in Japan, the same time span during which Buddhism moved beyond the court and came to permeate all levels of Japanese society. Most scholars who have written about *setsuwa* have connected them to oral and folkloric traditions, placed them in a chronology of Japanese national literature, mined them for hagiographic or quasi-historical information about certain people, places, and practices, or used them to chart the growth and development of Japanese popular religious culture.¹⁹ In addition, there have been several excellent annotated translations of *setsuwa* into English with introductory material that provides important social and cultural context.²⁰ Each of these approaches is valuable in its own right, and this study takes much information and inspiration from all of them while being oriented along somewhat different lines.

To put it succinctly, my interest lies with textual culture as a Buddhist enterprise assuming particularity in medieval Japan; *setsuwa* are the records that provide the most elaborate and well-attested evidence of this cultural interaction. I argue that “explanatory tales,” as a popular genre, record various attempts by Japanese devotees to understand and to capture the essence of Buddhist scripture, often in a vernacular and colloquial language. Although there are literary precedents for explanatory tales in both India (*jātaka* and *avadāna*) and China (*zhi guai* and Buddhist miracle tales, often denoted by the titular *yan ji*), medieval Japan produced the most richly varied and enduring tradi-

tion.²¹ When viewed alongside canonical sutra texts, these popular stories throw into sharp relief cultures and practices of reading, and they suggest particular ways of understanding the relation between reader and written text. In essence, I treat setsuwa as a repository, constituent, and matrix of “textual community.” As Martin Irvine notes, “A textual community is formed by the two dimensions of the social function of texts, which are as inseparable as the two sides of a sheet of parchment—a received canon of texts [here, sutras] and an interpretive methodology articulated in a body of commentary [here, setsuwa] which accompanied the texts and instituted their authority.”²² Though elucidating textual culture is my foremost objective, this study also comprises the first synchronic view in English of setsuwa as a genre. Thus, I devote an entire chapter (chapter 2) to situating Buddhist setsuwa as a literary genre with its roots in the performance of sermons.

While I treat the genres of setsuwa and sutras at greater length later, it may be helpful to provide some brief context at the outset. The first sutras entered Japan in the form of classical Chinese-language translations, and so they have remained, despite an awareness of both the presence of Sanskrit originals and the potential for translation into Japanese. This situation has impacted the textual culture of sutras in Japan in several ways. Perhaps most immediately, in a practical sense, it meant that there was a considerable gap between sound and sense. George Tanabe describes the situation succinctly, noting that the chanting of Chinese-language sutras in Japan “produces sounds that cannot be recognized as regular spoken language. The *Heart Sutra*, for example, is popular in East Asia as a Chinese text about emptiness, a fundamental Mahāyāna teaching, but when it is chanted in Japan, each Chinese character is given a Japanese pronunciation without any change in the Chinese grammatical word order of the text. The audible result is neither Japanese nor Chinese, but a ritual language unto itself.”²³ While chanting the sutras remained an important part of liturgy and an aesthetic pursuit in its own right, for instructional purposes sutra chanting was accompanied with sermons (Jp: *sekkyō*, “explaining the sutras,” or *seppō*, “explaining the dharma”).²⁴ Few of these sermons were recorded in toto, and so our best records of medieval sermonizing come to us in the form of literary collections of setsuwa.²⁵

The word *setsuwa*, as applied to literature, is a relatively modern coinage and has been used to indicate an entire range of literature, both oral and written.²⁶ Thus, some collections classified by modern scholars as setsuwa are not explicitly Buddhist, being oriented more toward stories related to a particular locale (Yoshino or Uji, for instance) or compiling more broadly stories detailing the arts and courtly culture (as with Ōe no Masafusa’s *Gōdanshō* of

1111). To speak more precisely, then, I am concerned with what Japanese scholars, at their most prolix, call “Buddhist setsuwa literature” (Jp: *bukkyō setsuwa bungaku*). Thus, in the pages of this study, the word *setsuwa* should be taken to refer to collections that treat obviously Buddhist material and that link themselves to the public venue of the sermon. Some collections, such as *A Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution for Good and Evil in Japan* (ca. 823), state their desire to act like a preacher, “pull[ing] people forward” with their words and guiding them onto the Buddhist path (NKBZ 10: 245). Others, like *The Three Jewels* (984) and *A Companion in Solitude* (1222), bring sermon material to recently tonsured women. Some, like *Notes Taken While Listening to One Hundred Sessions of Sermons* (ca. 1110), are based on a transcription of multiday sermonizing events, while yet others comprise compilations of a preacher’s favorite material (*A Collection of Sand and Pebbles*, compiled starting in 1279 and put into complete form in 1284) or include parenthetical remarks that may name the preacher from whom the compiler heard the story (*A Collection of Spiritual Awakenings*, 1214–15).

In seeking to understand the textual culture of sutras through the lens of medieval Japanese setsuwa, we must be sensitive to some important points. First, setsuwa are an admittedly didactic genre. They seek to instruct and to guide thought, speech, and action down very particular paths. Their attempts to persuade and encourage exert a steady pull on their narratives, and thus any depictions of textual engagement (reading, writing, chanting, etc.) must be taken with a grain of salt. A second, and related, point is that setsuwa speak to the exemplary, the miraculous, and the ideal. Thus, their narratives are not absolutely reliable as records of “what actually happened.” They are, rather, articles of faith and conviction in the modal sense: nuanced evocations of what *could* have, *should* have, *ought* to have, or *may* have happened. It is this modal sense that I seek to remind us of when I speak of “the imagination” or “the imaginary.”

A third consideration has to do with the extent to which setsuwa can be described as a “popular” genre. On the one hand, the poetic conventions of aristocratic culture clearly leave their mark on many setsuwa collections, most obviously those compilations generated during the genre’s heyday in the late tenth to early twelfth century. During this period, most compilers of setsuwa collections—and arguably most readers of them—were of aristocratic origin and remained associated with the courtly culture of the arts. What this means is that setsuwa compilers were writing for, and as, people who had a finely trained eye for metaphoric detail and a density of allusion. The earliest extant collections (*A Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution for Good and*

Evil in Japan) and the last one I survey here (*A Collection of Sand and Pebbles*) do not weave such an intricate brocade, but these are atypical. Thus, while many of the narratives preserved in setsuwa collections were undoubtedly utilized in public sermons, it is not clear to what extent the compilers embroidered their texts as they recorded them for more restricted, aristocratic audiences.

There is no reason to assume, however, that the metaphors I discuss here, even if perhaps less rhetorically complex in more widely popular contexts, were any less poignant. For instance, sutras may speak of the dharma as a gentle soaking rain, as in the "Medicinal Herbs" chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. Clearly taken by the sensuality of the image, elite authors could revel in this evocative liquidity, as Genshin (942–1017) does when he writes on the essence of the "Medicinal Herbs" chapter: "The vast sky / doesn't choose where to rain / but / each grass and tree gets wet / with a difference."²⁷ Rural farmers soaking in warm baths while reciting buddhas' names, however, surely felt the metaphor at work just as viscerally.²⁸ Again, while the courtier Fujiwara no Yorimichi (992–1074) constructed an entire villa (the Byōdōin) around a body of water, based on the metaphor of the dharma as a raft that carries one to the other shore of nirvana, pedestrians enjoying monk-constructed bridges surely were impacted by the metaphor in equally sensual, if more utilitarian, ways.²⁹ Given the ubiquity of Buddhist participation in these sorts of public works projects in medieval Japan and their connection to almsgiving campaigns, there is good reason to suppose that, even in the least literary and most impromptu of sermons, Buddhist figural language played an important and enduring role in communicating the teachings to a broad popular audience.

As a genre, setsuwa makes sweeping commedia-like gestures, providing glimpses of courtiers and beggars, the young and the elderly, the lusty and the restrained, the naively intuitive and the aesthetically polished. And in the performance context of public Buddhist services, setsuwa played to a wide audience indeed. Konishi Jin'ichi notes, for instance, that the congregations for such services were "all inclusive: both sexes, all social classes, and laity as well as clergy were in attendance. . . . Public Buddhist services provided the people with one form of entertainment during [the early medieval] period." And he even suggests that on such occasions temples became something like "city colleges where people learned new Chinese loanwords and characters in the course of being entertained" and edified.³⁰ While appealing to popular audiences, then, written setsuwa also modulate among elite traditions of Japanese poetic discourse and attendant norms of composition (humility *topoi*, allusive variation, and citation from Chinese-language sutras with their references

to Indic terms, concepts, places, and persons). There is no simple way to parse elite from popular here; there are only subtle variations in the techniques used to negotiate and shuttle among these various modes and their attendant hierarchies of authenticity.

In the final analysis, sutras and setsuwa work together to leverage people into a position of spiritual receptivity and to instruct them how to engage in the devotional praxes of reading, reciting, copying, and worshipping sutras. Both genres maintain that sustained contact with Buddhist scripture has the power to bring about miraculous changes in the devotee's physical reality, drawing attention to the materiality of sutra texts and their physical reception in the human body. Setsuwa on the topic of sutras reveal that sutra reading was (and remains) a visceral process, sensual and fantastic, involving an almost chemical reaction between body and sutra text in the course of which both are transformed in specific ways (the sutra may come alive, for instance, and the body may fill with light or be cured of illness).

CONCERNING MIRACLES

If setsuwa are "explanatory tales," then more often than not what they seek to explain are instances and eruptions of the miraculous. My understanding of miracles draws from the work of two scholars of the unusual in medieval culture. Caroline Walker Bynum's treatment of miracles associated with the Eucharist in medieval Europe is useful in thinking about the ways in which miracles, while never to be expected, may nevertheless be courted. Prayer, fasting, self-mutilation, going without sleep—all are methods by which a practitioner might situate herself in a position of receptivity to the miraculous. Similar techniques apply in medieval Japan: wakefulness, prayer, pilgrimage, training of the memory—all of these are known methods through which a devotee might seek a miraculous sign. Of course, doubt and suspicion may also elicit the miraculous, in which case the strange and shocking event is meant not to encourage further suspicion but rather to allay it.

Again, Robert Campany's discussion of anomaly accounts in medieval China is instructive. He points to the taxonomic drive behind recording instances of the anomalous and the role of "human agents within communities" in sorting events and objects into typical and atypical "with reference to some reigning worldview, system, or ideology."³¹ As Campany reminds us, remarking the atypical constitutes a way of describing the world and therefore exploring accounts of the anomalous from particular times and places can help us sketch the contours of that culture's concept of the cosmos and how it works.

I want to clarify further two specific attributes of miracles as I understand them here. First, miracles typically elicit positive responses. As Campany notes, anomalies may be received in a variety of fashions: they may be suppressed, ignored, ridiculed, and so forth. Miracles, as depicted in sutras and setsuwa, are a specific kind of anomaly to which the recipient responds with elation and welcome, or at least the relief of being given a second chance. Second, miracles are not aberrations. They are, rather, instances in which the core workings of the world are revealed in a sudden and (miraculously) observable fashion. In this sense, like Buddhist-inflected *zhi guai* (strange tales) of medieval China, the setsuwa of medieval Japan “aim to domesticate Buddhist tradition . . . , to weave it tightly into the fabric of [Japanese] society and implant it into the very landscape . . . , demonstrating its efficacy on [Japanese] soil despite its foreign provenance”—in the case of Japan, a doubly foreign provenance from India and then China.³²

Setsuwa relay numerous accounts of miracles associated with the reading, memorization, worship, and circulation of Buddhist scripture, thereby validating the accuracy of the teachings those scriptures contain, displaying the efficacy of the sutras (both as abstract teachings and as concrete objects), and claiming for them an authority that, while foreign, is anchored firmly to Japanese soil. Miracles are instances in which abiding concepts about the true nature of reality show forth in stark, sensually confirmable ways, like the tip of a volcanic island jutting suddenly above the ocean's surface, thereby revealing the workings of unseen tectonic plates deep below. Geology can tell us where to expect new islands, though we may still be surprised and amazed by particular instances of their appearance. Similarly, rhetorical patterns and narrative structures can alert attentive readers to the immanence of miracles of book and body, though we may still wonder over the curious particularities of individual stories.

LITERARY BUDDHISM

Buddhism, even when restricted to Mahāyāna Buddhism, is an enormous subject, and there is always the danger of treating it as monolithic. There is, of course, any number of ways of dividing this gigantic rock into more manageable portions, and by far the most common method of division is sectarian in nature. This is the tack favored by historians and religious studies scholars and others who wish to speak of Tendai, Shingon, Kegon, Pure Land, or Zen Buddhism. In this book, however, I take a different approach. I am, by training and avocation, a literary scholar, and as such I have focused this study on the

literary aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism. In considering sutras, my first concern is how those texts use language, the figures they employ, the narrative expectations they engender, the readers they imagine. As Alan Cole has noted, despite a “stable resistance to thinking about” Mahāyāna sutras in literary terms, these texts do in fact operate “at a fairly sophisticated level of symbolic exchange,” and it makes sense to pay close attention to how they function as literature.³³ To that end, the first chapter of this book focuses on excavating some of the symbols and structures through which sutras build themselves into narratives of meaning, paying special attention to the metacommentary that sutras offer about how they should be read and about the place of reading vis-à-vis other methods of textual engagement, such as recitation and circumambulation. By the same token, I understand the medieval Japanese genre of setsuwa as a literary effort to come to terms with, and to celebrate, the notions of textuality and literariness that sutras posit.

My choice to foreground the rhetorical and to downplay the sectarian has solid precedent. While some sutras are more popular in certain Buddhist schools than in others (the *Sutra of Meditation on the Buddha Amitāyus* in Pure Land schools, for instance, or the *Vimalakīrti* in Zen schools), none is the exclusive property of any particular sect, and some sutras, particularly the *Lotus*, are ubiquitous. Setsuwa are similarly cross-sectarian in nature. *Notes Taken While Listening to One Hundred Sessions of Sermons*, for instance, consists of sermons delivered by preachers from at least three different sectarian orientations (Tendai, Hossō, and Kegon); *The Three Jewels* discusses rites and ceremonies held at Mount Hiei (Tendai), Yakushiji (Hossō), Hokkeji (Shingon Ritsu), Daijūji (Shingon), and Tōdaiji (Kegon) among others; and through his *Collection of Sand and Pebbles* the nominally Rinzaï Zen monk Mujū accepts Hōnen's (1133–1212) Pure Land recitation of the *nenbutsu* on a par with Enni's (1202–80) seated meditation, speaking as a “voice for pluralism.”³⁴ While they may be put to sectarian uses, then, sutras and setsuwa are manifestly trans-sectarian genres.

DEFINING THE “MEDIEVAL”

Temporally speaking, the setsuwa considered in this study span the ninth through the thirteenth centuries in Japan; the first major Buddhist collection (*A Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution*) was compiled in the 820s, and the last (*Collection of Sand and Pebbles*) was completed in the 1280s. Historians of Japan will recognize this range as corresponding to the Heian (794–1185) and Kamakura (1185–1333) periods. I have chosen to refer to

this temporal period as “medieval” (Jp: *chūsei*) for several reasons. First, however imprecise the mapping may be, the term “medieval” means something to the general reader, whereas “Heian” and “Kamakura” communicate little to a reader not already familiar with Japanese history. The other option, “ninth through thirteenth centuries,” I employ on occasion, but what it offers in precision it lacks in concision, and I generally opt for the more economical “medieval.” More specifically, in using “medieval” I point to literature and the literary as the basis of this study. “Heian” and “Kamakura” are place names referring to the political capitals of Japan, and to use them as temporal categories to parse literature suggests that literature is a handmaiden to history, inevitably determined by political contingencies. To be sure, a relation between changing historical realities and literary developments exists but, as a specialist in literature, I prefer to think of it as more of a reciprocal exchange. By rejecting “Heian” and “Kamakura” in favor of “medieval,” I mean to signal that literature provides the foremost element under consideration in this study.

Further, my interest is to identify and examine abiding concepts, figures, and metaphors in a body of literature (*setsuwa*) pertaining to textual culture. Particular stories may appear in multiple collections spanning centuries—both *The Three Jewels* of 984 and *Tales from Times Now Past* (ca. 1120) repeat stories from *A Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution* (ca. 823), for instance—suggesting a sustained interest in specific ideas and a stability to ways of expressing those ideas in language. Rather than entertain a diachronic attitude, such as might be inhered in the use of “ninth through thirteenth centuries,” I intend the term “medieval” to gesture to this relatively stable, underlying “shape.”³⁵ This usage of “medieval” typifies some scholarly writing on Japanese literature. For Konishi Jin’ichi, whose work has been influential in shaping literary periodization of Japanese works in the West, the core identifying characteristic of medieval literature in Japan consists of a mature relationship to continental culture—primarily the influences of Buddhism and Chinese poetry—which had been accepted, adapted, and integrated with indigenous norms. Rajyashree Pandey similarly observes that, “In Japan there was no written literary tradition predating the advent of Buddhism, and the introduction of a written script from China went hand in hand with the encounter with Buddhist canonical writing,” resulting in a “religio-aesthetic tradition, in which aesthetics could not be defined outside of Buddhism.”³⁶ This tradition, she argues, dominates medieval poetics, a contention that many have endorsed but few have explored in detail.

Finally, my usage of “medieval” coincides with recent work on specific types of Japanese Buddhist praxis. For some time it was common to posit a break

in Buddhism between its earlier incarnations in the sixth through twelfth centuries and a “new” “Kamakura” Buddhism that increasingly stressed simplification of praxis, salvation in doxias, and a tendency to cohere around powerful individual personalities. These changes in Buddhism, the argument goes, were spurred by two key factors: the advent of *mappō* (the final age of the dharma) in 1052 C.E. and the political shift from aristocratic to warrior rule which involved a relocation of the capital from Heian to Kamakura and a trained widespread cultural upheaval. Many studies over the past twenty years, however, point instead to numerous points of continuity between “Heian” and “Kamakura” Buddhism and maintain that many of the presumed changes to Buddhism in the Kamakura period had long-established precedents in earlier centuries.³⁷ *Setsuwa*, and the general liturgy of public Buddhist services in which *setsuwa* were employed, are but one of the many sources that suggest the power of this continuity, the broad brushstroke of which is “medieval”

A NOTE ON SOUTH ASIAN AND CHINESE MATERIALS

As coming chapters will show, Japanese *setsuwa* make specific claims about the benefits of textual engagement, about the text as a sort of body, and about the possibilities of embodied reading. In this, the authors of Japanese tales were not creating out of thin air but were interpreting, adapting, and extending concepts, structures, ideas, and tropes that came to them from Chinese and Indian Buddhist literature. Sutras were one genre of Buddhist writing that traveled from India to Japan, via Chinese translations and sometimes the good graces of Korean envoys, and portions of sutra narratives at times found expression in vernacular miracle tales. Such is the case, for instance, with the story of the “Himalaya Boy” (Jp: *Sessen Dōji*), which I discuss at length in later chapters and which can be found in the *Nirvana Sutra*. Minamoto no Tamenori, author of *The Three Jewels* (984), chose the story to appear in the opening section of his *setsuwa* collection, where it is part of a sequence of tales treating the former lives of the Buddha.

In fact, stories of the Buddha’s former incarnations (Sk: *jātaka*) and the larger literary class to which such stories belong, karmic biographies (*Śavadāna*), featured prominently among the earliest strata of Indian Buddhist literature to be translated into Chinese, starting in the middle of the 3rd century C.E., where they continued to be used as materials for sermonizing.³⁸ In China, these stories combined with native narrative forms, most prominently that of “strange tales” (Ch: *zhi guai*), to produce, between the fourth and tenth centuries C.E., a vibrant genre of miracle tale literature. These Chinese

collections of miracle tales were circulating in Japan by at least the eighth century, and a number of the stories in the earliest extant Japanese setsuwa collection (*Nihon Genpō Zen'aku Ryōiki, A Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution for Good and Evil in Japan*, ca. 823) seem to be based upon textual antecedents from a Chinese collection (*Mingbao Ji, Records of Supernatural Retribution*, ca. 653–55).

My point, then, is not to show how all these genres (sutra, *jātaka*, *avadāna*) worked in India or China, but simply to point out that some of the concerns I locate in the Japanese tradition had been raised earlier, in Chinese and South Asian works. Any Chinese or South Asian texts I reference in this study, therefore, have been selected simply and strictly because the ideas they express receive important attention and elaboration later, in Japan. Thus, though I do at times make brief reference to South Asian materials and practices, I do so simply for the purpose of suggesting areas of resonance, possibilities of continuity, and opportunities for potential future research.

OVERVIEW

Each of the succeeding chapters approaches the relation between book and body from a different angle, with the central question remaining: how does Buddhist rhetoric, as materialized on the written page, work on human bodies? Perhaps not unexpectedly, as I wrote this book, I began to think of its structure as analogous to that of a human body. Chapters 1 and 2 function like the skin, that most public of surfaces, the external membrane that encloses us, represents us to the world, and provides the sensual plane of our interactions with others. These “skin” chapters explore the generic dimensions of the two key genres shaping Buddhist discourse in medieval Japan: the sutras and the “explanatory tales” (setsuwa) that seek to interpret the sutras into specificity, the here and now of named people and places, of (usually) Japanese people on (often) Japanese soil. The first chapter examines the metafictional elements of sutras, the way these elements work together to create agency and presence, and the directives toward which sutras turn this authority when they ask their devotees to accept, keep, read, recite, copy, worship, and expound them. The second chapter explores setsuwa as an art form that moves between literature and performance, and establishes a medieval context for setsuwa texts.

To continue the analogy, chapters 3 and 4 are what medieval Japanese might term the *shinkan* (literally, “heart and liver”) of the study. They are what bring it internal life and vivacity, the specificity of the interior. These chapters focus on setsuwa that concern sutras and their devotees. Chapter 3 explores how

setsuwa sketch an inverse relation between body and text, such that as the body decays in sickness and death, text begins to cohere and unify: composition balanced against decomposition. Chapter 4 builds off this discussion, describing the various ways in which the sutra fragment is able to incorporate into a humanoid form (that is, both *in* and *as* a human body). This chapter considers statuary, chirographic practice, and literary evidence to argue that, in the medieval imagination, the voice served as a “musical shuttle” coursing between body, mind, and scroll.³⁹

The conclusion then provides the skeletal structure, the spine. In it I examine a pivotal metaphor for textuality in the Buddhist tradition, that of “turning the wheel of the dharma” (Sk: *dharma cakka pravartana*; Jp: *tenbōrin*) The study culminates in an appraisal of Buddhist technologies of reading that typically spin text around a central axis, suggesting the same motion as, though perhaps a greater freedom of movement than, the twisting of flesh around the spine and evoking a similarly embodied practice.

My argument proceeds from the idea that the written text of the sutras and the human body are comparable sites. As Myōe understood, both book and text are fragile, mutable, subject to decay and decomposition—in short, they are exemplary sites for encountering central Buddhist teachings on suffering, impermanence, and detachment. I argue further that the human body and the sacred text are not distinct from one another, but rather occupy interpenetrating spheres. Sacred text can and does take on human form, and humans can and do transform their physical bodies into both the implements necessary to write down sacred text (skin as paper, blood as ink, bones as stylus, hair as brush tip) and ultimately into repositories of sacred text. *Miracles of Book and Body: Buddhist Textual Culture and Medieval Japan* shows that, through extended devotional activity, the body becomes a sutra scroll around which the skin wraps itself like a silk brocade cover.

Locating Setsuwa in Performance

ON THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY of the Sixth Month of 1110, the otherwise unknown priest Kyōshakubō delivered a sermon before an audience of high-ranking aristocrats in the imperial capital of Heian. His sermon was part of a multiday event organized in accordance with a vow made by one of the imperial princesses. Seated before the assembly, he opened his address with the following words: “The heart of the Dhāraṇī [chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*], on which I will lecture today, is that this chapter tells how the bodhisattva Medicine King, the bodhisattva Brave Donor, the four deva kings, and various other beings each uttered a vow and taught a [protective] *dhāraṇī* for the sake of guarding holders of the sutra [Jp: *jikkyōsha*]. Though you have heard this many times already, there is no such thing as not receiving merit from this *Lotus Sutra*, even if the title only brushes your ear in passing or you intone it, mouthing it in jest.”¹

Kyōshakubō then cites a brief passage from the sutra in Chinese, which he glosses by means of a lengthy vernacular tale, a *setsuwa*. Though I will discuss this tale more fully in chapter 4, briefly, a man casts aspersions on the efficacy of the Buddhist teachings but happens to come into possession of a copy of the *Lotus*, which he shoves into his closet. Years later, when he dies and goes to judgment, he is spared reincarnation in hell simply for his unintentional act of protecting the sutra from the elements. Kyōshakubō concludes his sermon by praising his audience members, who, he observes, have followed the

urgings of their hearts and committed themselves to holding, reading, and reciting the *Lotus*, and to supporting a multiday preaching event. The merit they have gained, he argues, is beyond the power of language to express.

Passages like these help us to position *setsuwa* alongside sutras as the two textual bases for the thriving medieval performance genre of sermonizing (Jp: *sekkyō* or *seppō*). As “explanatory tales,” *setsuwa* explore the teachings and efficacy of the sutras and, in so doing, they fulfill the request that many sutras make to be expounded upon and clarified. Notably, Kyōshakubō commends his listeners for responding to four of the five injunctions the *Lotus Sutra* specifically makes when it asks its devotees to accept and keep, read, recite, copy, and expound it for the sake of other beings, and other sermons in the collection suggest that copying the sutra was another of the event's goals. *Setsuwa* thus both explain the sutras and, simultaneously, respond to the injunctions that those sutras levy. In addition, *setsuwa* act as a bridge, ferrying meaning from classical Chinese to the vernacular and describing a connection between sacred text and human body.² Kyōshakubō moves quickly from a telegraphic, Sinicized citation of the sutra to a substantial Japanese-language narrative, and his sermon is typical in its usage of physical, sensual tropes. Instead of simply hearing the sutras, their sounds “brush the ear,” and instead of simply intoning them, we “mouth” their words, suggesting the corporeal nature of the interaction.

IMAGINING THE MEDIEVAL

Complementing the previous discussion of sutras, this chapter refocuses the question of textual presence onto the premodern genre of *setsuwa*. Like sutras, *setsuwa* are hyperaware of their position as written objects and, as performed texts, they seek to transcend the page and engage their readers on a corporeal level. In Japan, *setsuwa* scholarship tends to focus mostly on the orality of the tales, the ways in which they reflect the development of the Japanese language, and their connection to folkloric, popular cultural traditions. While useful in terms of developing a literary canon, this scholarly lens sets somewhat anachronistic and romanticized constraints on our understanding of the genre, defining it more in terms of protonationalism, rather than as a religious and rhetorical project.³

One of my major goals in this chapter, therefore, is to decouple *setsuwa* from the more modern question of national identity and focus instead on examining *setsuwa* in their medieval performance context, articulating a sense of how monks (and very occasionally nuns) sought to explain the complexities of Buddhist doctrine to lay audiences. If I see Buddhism as a transcultural phenom-

anon, a textual diaspora stretching across what would become national boundaries, this view is validated by the structure of setsuwa collections, which frequently organize their tales along a temporal and geographical vector as Buddhism stretches from its origins on the Indian subcontinent, across the breadth of the Asian continent, and finally to the islands of Japan. While the archipelago maintains its cultural distinctiveness, setsuwa envision Japan as a part of a larger, pan-Asian, Buddhist cultural sphere.

Another remarkable, and related, trend in Japanese setsuwa scholarship is the tendency to speak of setsuwa collections in a sensualized, often eroticized, manner. In this treatment setsuwa texts (and particularly their manuscripts) are something of an exquisite corpse, or sometimes an elusive beauty, into which the scholar must breathe new life. This way of viewing medieval texts can be readily observed in non-Asian contexts as well and has, I think, to do with certain modern conceptions about the oral nature of medieval textuality, a kind of literary "presence" that has been lost (or perceived as lost) in this post-Gutenberg age of rapid mechanical reproduction. As the sermon I alluded to above should suggest, setsuwa collections do in fact concern themselves with questions of somaticity, sensuality, and ontology to such an extent that the text-flesh relation forms one of the most consistent themes of the genre. A second task of this chapter, then, is to consider the prefaces and colophons of setsuwa collections: those places where the compilers speak most openly about their intentions and motivations. A close reading of these passages reveals some interesting things about how compilers wished their collections to work, if not always *as* a body, at least *on* the body, most often as medicine, healing sound, or sustenance, but also at times in violent and erotic ways.

In short, this chapter will begin to explore the very particular ways in which setsuwa as a genre thinks through the text-flesh relation, the liminal position that setsuwa holds with respect to orality and writing, and the importance of the performance setting to setsuwa mechanics. My working theses are, first, that setsuwa collections comprise the record of a major performance genre in medieval (especially twelfth- and thirteenth-century) Japan. Second, setsuwa seek to interact with their audiences in physical, sometimes highly sensual ways, perhaps responding to perceptions of a certain life force emanating from the sutras that they complement. And, third, setsuwa detail the various ways in which believers in medieval Japan sought to understand and cultivate the union of human body and sacred writ, providing an intriguing chapter in the book of Buddhist textual culture. In pursuing these theses, this chapter begins by introducing the nine setsuwa collections I will explore and explaining the rationale for choosing these particular texts. I then move through a series

of close readings of prefaces and colophons, in which setsuwa compilers describe their textual project as either embodied or as acting on the body. Finally, I provide a more complete sketch of the medieval sermonizing scene in which setsuwa tales were employed.

AVADĀNA, ZHI GUAI, AND SETSUWA

While some of the material found in setsuwa no doubt has its origins in oral narrative—folklore, stories about native deities (Jp: *kami*), legends associated with specific locales and place names such as was collected in the gazetteers (Jp: *fudoki*) of the eighth century, and so forth—there can be no doubt that the Japanese genre of "explanatory tales" was influenced by Indian and Chinese narrative forms. Chief among these influential forms were the Indian "karmic biography" (Sk: *avadāna*) and its subset of "birth stories" (Sk: *jātaka*, stories of the Buddha's former incarnations), and the Chinese "strange tale" (Ch: *zhi guai*) and its particular manifestation in accounts of miracles (Ch: *yanji*).

Avadāna is a major genre of Indian Buddhist literature that was produced from at least the second century B.C.E. and continued to see new compilations until at least the eleventh century in India, and later in outlying areas such as Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Southeast Asia. The form was a mainstay of Buddhist missionary activity throughout the continent: as Joel Tatelman notes, "It can hardly be random coincidence that *avadānas* and other narrative works form a major part of the holdings of monastic libraries as distant from each other in time and space as early twentieth-century Laos and first-century Afghanistan."⁴ *Avadānas* are both entertaining and didactic (aimed particularly at illustrating the workings of karma), and, according to John Strong, "were and still are used by Buddhist preachers in popular sermons."⁵ Whereas *jātaka* tales feature the historical Buddha as protagonist, *avadānas* are less exclusive, commonly detailing the life and actions of a lay believer. Most *avadāna* and *jātaka* have a three-part structure comprised of a frame narrative set in the present, a flashback narrative, and a "juncture" in which the protagonist in the flashback scene is revealed to be none other than a former incarnation of one of the people in the present-tense frame narrative. In some instances, however, *avadāna* narratives will "shrink the 'story of the past' almost to nothing, while the 'story of the present' becomes the true *raison d'être* of the tale," in which case attention shifts "away from deeds in previous births to actions in the here-and-now."⁶

As I mentioned in the introduction, *avadāna* compilations were, along with sutras, among the earliest Indian Buddhist texts to be translated into Chinese

where, Donald Gjertson argues, they combined with a native narrative form, “strange tales” (Ch: *zhi guai*), resulting in the birth of dedicated collections of Buddhist miracle stories. The so-called “strange tales” (Robert Campamy’s “anomaly accounts” is another apt translation of the term *zhi guai*) are widely heterogeneous in their subject matter, though they generally describe events or objects that were somehow felt to be either unnatural or supernatural and thus in need of interpretation. Typically the accounts are quite brief and very much focused on the local terrain.

As we will see in the stories that follow, setsuwa recapitulate a number of the narrative strategies, structures, and preferences of the Indian “karmic biography” and the Chinese “anomaly account.” From *avadāna*, which in Mahāyāna contexts were often organized around illustrating the six perfections of the bodhisattva, setsuwa inherit repeating tropes of self-sacrifice, a structural tendency toward temporal doubling (in which the present moment serves as a narrative frame for a past event), and an abiding thematic concern with past lives and the workings of karma. Again, influenced by Chinese miracle tales and anomaly accounts, setsuwa show a tendency to focus attention on presenting and then explaining the cosmological workings behind unusual events.⁷ From these Chinese genres, setsuwa also inherit a trend toward downplaying both the elevated status of the main character and the “revelation scene” in favor of focusing on the present-moment moral choices of a quotidian character (a lay believer or a nonbeliever) who inhabits a specifically local time and place. And, like both the Indian “karmic biography” and the Chinese “miracle tale,” Japanese “explanatory tales” tended to find use in sermons.⁸

Setsuwa, however, does chart its own territory as a Japanese genre. For instance, when collections refer explicitly to material from India or China (as in *Tales of Times Now Past*, discussed below), it is often as a part of a different tripartite structure, one that is aimed at situating Japan at the cutting edge of Buddhist expansion, the current location of the Buddhist event horizon. Setsuwa also provide important evidence about the ways in which medieval devotees sought to shape Buddhist belief and practice to local norms and preferences.

THE TEXTS

Though I will be making occasional reference to other texts and genres, nine main setsuwa collections serve as the backbone for this study.⁹ The first three represent the earliest extant setsuwa texts, which span the course of three centuries: the *Nihon Genpō Zen'aku Ryōiki* (*A Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution for Good and Evil in Japan*, ca. 823), the *Sanbō Ekotoba*

(*Illustrations and Explanations of the Three Jewels*, 984), and the *Hokke Genki* (*A Record of Miracles of the Lotus Sutra*), which was compiled between 1040 and 1044. The next two centuries saw a marked uptick in setsuwa production as Buddhism came to permeate the fabric of Japanese society, and I have chosen six representative texts, three from the twelfth century and three from the thirteenth. These are the *Hyakuza Hōdan Kikigakishō* (*Notes Taken While Listening to One Hundred Sessions of Sermons*, ca. 1110), the massive *Konjaku Monogatari* (*Tales from Times Now Past*, by 1120?), the heavily literary *Hōbut-sushū* (*A Collection of Treasures*, by 1180?), the intensely personal *Hosshinshū* (*A Collection of Spiritual Awakenings*, 1214–15) and *Kankyō no Tomo* (*A Companion in Solitude*, 1222) collections, and the somewhat wry *Shasekishū* (*A Collection of Sand and Pebbles*, 1279–83). For easier reading, I will generally refer to the collections by abbreviated English titles (*The Three Jewels*, for instance, rather than *Sanbō Ekotoba*). Specialist readers may refer to the setsuwa finding list at the front of this book, which gives the full Japanese titles, along with their kanji, authors, and likely dates of compilation.

I have chosen to concentrate on these nine collections for a number of reasons. First, unlike many other collections that are often included under the scholarly rubric of “setsuwa,” these nine works organize their explanatory tales in service of a consistently Buddhist project. The tales serve to elucidate a referenced sutra passage, refer to a given Buddhist rite or ceremony, include a moral reference explaining how the setsuwa may be used to clarify points of Buddhist doctrine, express the story of personal religious awakening, or are presented expressly as materials for use in sermons.

Second, as Kojima Takayuki has somewhat playfully noted, setsuwa collections may be roughly divided into two main types: the “taciturn” and the “loquacious.”¹⁰ I have chosen to focus on these nine compilations because, generally speaking, they are loquacious. They provide self-referential hints and suggestions, include colophons, or contain extensive prefatory notes so that enough may be known, or guessed with relative certainty, about their origins to sustain critical speculations about, and inquiry into, relationships between the written collection, its compiler, and the compiler’s intended audience. The one exception to this rule is *Tales from Times Now Past*, which includes no prefaces but which stands as the most widely influential setsuwa collection of all time, providing the core material for countless literary works in Japan, up to and including film and manga in the current century.

Finally, *A Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution* represents the first Japanese setsuwa collection and *A Collection of Sand and Pebbles* the last explicitly Buddhist one, with the others more or less evenly spaced through

the intervening centuries, so that, taken together, these nine texts may be said to cover the full arc of setsuwa production during the medieval period in Japan.

A WONDROUS RECORD OF IMMEDIATE KARMIC RETRIBUTION

The *Nihon Genpō Zen'aku Ryōiki* (*A Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution for Good and Evil in Japan*) was compiled circa 823 C.E. and, as its title suggests, is particularly concerned with the karmic cycle of sin and retribution. The setsuwa are recorded in classical Chinese, the lingua franca of classical and medieval Japanese Buddhism, though the prefatory notes indicate that the compiler intended the stories' use in ritualistic and oratorical contexts, at which time they most likely would have been rendered into colloquial Japanese. For the most part, the setsuwa in this collection are very short and unadorned, little more than plot summaries giving important details and providing a closing moral. The collection evinces little internal organization, with stories seeming to have been written down more or less as the compiler recalled them.

The compiler Kyōkai (sometimes rendered Keikai) was a low-ranking Hossō school monk who resided at the Yakushiji temple in the recently abandoned old capital of Heijōkyō.¹¹ Though his exact sources are unknown, it seems certain that the setsuwa in this collection represent an amalgam of stories he had read in various Chinese sources to which were added renditions of local and contemporary incidents that lent themselves to a Buddhist explanation. As Donald Gjetson and Kyoko Motomichi-Nakamura have pointed out, several of the stories in the *Wondrous Record* bear a striking resemblance to tales included in the *Mingbao ji*, a collection of some fifty-seven sketches compiled in seventh-century China by the government official and devout layman Tang Lin (b. 600?).¹² In eight instances Kyōkai has done little more than change proper nouns, relocating stories from China to Japan and suggesting that they happened to Japanese people. Thus, while the title of the collection calls attention to itself as a *ki* (suggesting a written record of historical events), one must be sensitive to fictionalized elements.

THE THREE JEWELS

The next extant setsuwa collection, the *Sanbō Ekotoba* (*Illustrations and Explanations of the Three Jewels*), did not appear for another century and a half, quite possibly because between the eighth and tenth centuries the state generally discouraged clerics from venturing outside the monastic complexes, mostly located in and around the imperial capitals, thus placing severe limi-

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tations on oratorical opportunities. The fifth article of the Sōniryō (Regulations for monks and nuns), promulgated in 701, expressly forbade monks and nuns from leaving the temple complex, gathering crowds of commoners, and preaching to them. The regulations were adopted as part of the legal machinery of the *ritsuryō* system of government, which remained in place, at least nominally, until the tenth century.¹³

The Three Jewels was completed in 984 against the fading backdrop of this system of government, and it is a much more polished and organized piece of writing than its successor. The work is neatly divided into three sections, each of which is thematically devoted to one of the "Three Jewels" of Buddhism: the Buddha, his teachings, and the sangha of believers. The first section consists of setsuwa that illustrate the various perfections (of patience, meditation, and wisdom, for example) that the historical Buddha achieved as a result of experiences in his many past incarnations. The second section offers setsuwa that describe the teachings and miraculous acts of various Buddhist luminaries, especially famous monks and nuns of Japan, while the final section uses the setsuwa format to explain the origins of a number of Buddhist ceremonies and rituals, activities that draw the sangha together.

The collection was created by Minamoto no Tamenori (d. 1011), an aristocratic scholar, lay believer, and expert in Chinese poetry.¹⁴ The project was commissioned by the imperial family and composed expressly for the use of an ailing imperial princess who died shortly after being presented with the text. The collection, written in a Japanese that is occasionally quite poetically sophisticated, represents an attempt to bring Buddhism to the princess, who had taken the initial vows of a nun though she was too frail to enter fully into Buddhist life. As an *ekotoba* (illustrated writing) it was originally intended to pair drawings with prosaic explanations so that the graphic and the chirographic provided mutual commentary, but the illustrations either were never completed or have been lost in the intervening centuries. At any rate, this format suggests that the collection was meant to be perused slowly, carefully, and often. One imagines the ill princess, confined to her chambers, reading and rereading the collection as a textual proxy that gestured toward the wider Buddhist world that she was largely unable to see or hear in person.¹⁵

MIRACLES OF THE LOTUS SUTRA

Completed approximately sixty years after *The Three Jewels*, the *Hokke Genki* (*A Record of Miracles of the Lotus Sutra*) is, as the title indicates, wholly devoted to documenting miraculous occurrences associated with the powers of

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to a more overtly written, literary project. Because it has no prefaces, it is impossible to state with certainty exactly when, why, or by whom the massive collection was created. Tradition long attributed the thirty-one volumes to the aristocrat and Buddhist layman Minamoto no Takakuni (1004–77), but more recent scholarship has shown this to be highly unlikely, as a number of the tales are known to have originated several years after his death. This has led to speculation that the project may have been the product of collaboration, perhaps by a team of men (aristocratic and/or clerical) working in tandem, along the model of the editorial teams that created the great poetic anthologies of the Heian court. Contemporary scholarship places the “completion” of the text to within a few decades of Takakuni’s death, citing 1120 as “a not unlikely approximate date.”²¹

The collection is incredibly ambitious in its scope, tracing the origin of Buddhism and its movement across the continent to Japan. The first five volumes are set in India and detail the life and times of Buddha. The next five volumes shift to China and the focus, though still clearly on Buddhism, widens slightly to include some more secular tales and histories. The last twenty-one volumes comprise a full commedia of Japan, beginning with the transmission of Buddhism to that country and continuing the explicitly Buddhist theme for some ten volumes (sutra miracles, descriptions of the Pure Land, tales of karmic retribution, etc.) before turning to secular anecdotes concerning aristocrats, warriors, and craftsmen, and ultimately concluding with a one-volume gazetteer of anomalous events in the provinces. Some portions are missing and perhaps were never completed, such as the planned volume on imperial politics. It seems clear that *Tales from Times Now Past* was meant to serve as something of a central warehouse of Buddhist tales, an almost encyclopedic reference work. In this capacity it draws material from a number of earlier collections both Chinese (the *Mingbao ji*, for instance) and Japanese (*A Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution* and *Miracles of the Lotus Sutra*, among others), sometimes providing alternate or more elaborate retellings, thus giving some indication of the popularity of certain setsuwa and their ability to remain in circulation over a span of several centuries.²²

A COLLECTION OF TREASURES

Like *Tales from Times Now Past*, the *Hōbutushū* (*A Collection of Treasures*) was long attributed to a known historical figure, the famous *waka* poet, warrior, and courtier Taira no Yasuyori (fl. 1157–1200). Yasuyori found himself

on the losing side of the civil wars that ushered in the transition from aristocratic to military rule in the late twelfth century. He was exiled to Kikigashima, “the island of demons,” at the southern tip of the Japanese archipelago, before being pardoned and returning to the Heian capital, where he took the tonsure and entered the Buddhist path. Modern researchers, however, have begun to doubt Yasuyori’s authorship, and Yamada Shōzen, one of the foremost scholars of the collection, has suggested that whoever the real compiler was concealed himself behind a cleverly constructed narrator who was made to resemble Yasuyori in many of his life experiences.²³ If this is the case, then *A Collection of Treasures* represents an entirely new textual innovation for setsuwa: their placement within an intentionally fictionalized context. Tellingly, that context is one of temple-based sermonizing.

A Collection of Treasures begins with the return of its narrator from exile and his arrival in the capital. He pays a visit to an old friend who tells him about the miraculous statue of Śakyamuni Buddha that has been installed at Seiryōji, a temple to the northwest of the city, and which is rumored to have been done from life. The narrator goes to the temple and, finding a great crowd assembled in the main hall, slips into a side room where he begins to recite the *Lotus Sutra*. When he hears the priest enter the main hall, he listens through the wall to the cleric’s speech about the statue. As the day continues, some of the assembled pilgrims begin to discuss what they value in life before the priest takes over the conversation and speaks through the night about the true treasure that is Buddhism.

The setting of the collection as the transcription of a sermon is alluring and does have precedent, as texts like *One Hundred Sessions of Sermons* suggest, but it is almost certainly a literary fiction. The scaffolding of the text is simply too apparent as the monk churns with dogged persistence through the regular suspects of Buddhist oratory: how rare it is to meet the dharma; the doctrines of emptiness and transience; the six paths of reincarnation; the various pains of human existence; piety, merit, and reclusion; the three jewels of the Buddha, dharma, and sangha; each of the precepts (against killing, theft, intoxication, etc.); the practices of confession, charity, and visualization; and finally the power of the *Lotus Sutra* and a description of the Pure Land. Through a study of various manuscripts of the collection, Koizumi Hiroshi has shown that some sections appear to have been fully fleshed out while others remain either in a skeletal form or in some intermediate state (for example, with a string of related *waka* that the compiler may have meant to edit into a flowing narrative at some later point).²⁴ Based on his research, Koizumi posits that

the first version of the collection was in circulation by 1188, after which it underwent a series of revisions and supplementations.

A COLLECTION OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENINGS

With the *Hosshinshū* (*A Collection of Spiritual Awakenings*) we tread once again on firmer ground: the traditional attribution of the collection to the famous poet Kamo no Chōmei (1155–1216) seems accurate, as do the dates of composition, between 1214 and 1215. To a degree not seen in previous collections, *A Collection of Spiritual Awakenings* is deeply colored by its author's personal experience, and the text comprises an intimate read of Chōmei's life as he looks back at his own individual history, particularly his stumbling progress on the Buddhist path. The collection also reflects Chōmei's training as a *waka* poet, his fairly intimate knowledge of the Kamakura military government and their imperial rivals at the court of Emperor Gotoba, and his long tenure as a semirecluse in the mountains around the Heian capital.

There are no early manuscripts still extant, but material from different textual lineages suggests that the text was slightly unstable. In particular, Chōmei (or perhaps someone else) seems to have added material to the end of the collection, perhaps circulating first one copy and then an expanded version at a later date. Again, it is likely that over the centuries each person who copied the manuscript saw fit to make slight alterations, reflecting his or her own needs and tastes, and we do know that our current version differs somewhat from bits and pieces of *A Collection of Spiritual Awakenings* that were cited in the 1603 Jesuit dictionary *Nippo Jishō*. Unlike some other setsuwa texts that disappeared from circulation, sometimes for centuries at a time, Chōmei's collection remained popular and influential from the time of its conception in the early thirteenth century to the present day.²⁵

Aside from language that is sometimes beautifully poetic in texture, *A Collection of Spiritual Awakenings* holds particular value for the lengthy meditations with which each tale or group of related tales typically concludes. These reprises, which are sometimes two or three times as long as the setsuwa they gloss, represent an outgrowth of the telegraphically short morals that earlier collections contain, and they provide a fuller picture of how at least one medieval person made sense of setsuwa tales as Buddhist texts that connected to a larger field of spiritual thought and practice. The author provides no overt organizational scheme other than a tendency to return to moments of religious awakening, and the tales flow one into the next by way of a loose, almost *renga* (linked verse)-like poetic connection.

A COMPANION IN SOLITUDE

The penultimate collection I study here, the *Kankyō no Tomo* (*A Companion in Solitude*), was long attributed to the powerful Tendai abbot and famous *waka* poet Jien (1155–1225), a tribute to the beauty, polish, and light-handed pathos of the collection. Recent scholarship, however, has proved fairly conclusively that the compiler was actually a much less well-known Tendai monk named Keisei (1189–1268). Though a scion of the Kujō clan, a branch of the politically influential Northern Fujiwara, Keisei was dropped as a child, leading to a permanent deformity of the back. Thus, he entered the priesthood at a young age. He remained quite well connected socially, however, securing funds for a trip to China, from which he returned with some two hundred Buddhist scrolls. His traveling done, Keisei settled into the rhythms of a mountain-dwelling Buddhist recluse, though he maintained communication with friends and relatives in the capital. Eventually he received a commission from a noblewoman (probably a relative) for the completion of a setsuwa collection that was to guide and inspire her in her practices as a novice on the Buddhist path.²⁶

The dominant thread in the collection concerns the lives and practices of Buddhist recluses and mountain dwellers, people who, like both Keisei and his patroness, had renounced the world in order to live in peaceful meditation. But *A Companion in Solitude* is delicately woven from a number of other thematic threads as well. The moment of religious awakening, the issue of gender in any woman's attempt to overcome the five obstructions²⁷ and advance on the Buddhist path, instances of lay devotees' rebirth in the Pure Land, and the contemplation of dead and decaying bodies all appear frequently throughout the collection. While most of the setsuwa are quite short, they are full of finely drawn detail and sensitive emotional observations. The collection is unique in being termed a *tomo*, literally a "friend," a term that presents the written text as a living presence that was to perform the role of guide on the Buddhist path.

A COLLECTION OF SAND AND PEBBLES

The last major collection that I cover in this study was completed in 1283, some sixty years after *A Companion in Solitude*. The *Shasekishū* (*A Collection of Sand and Pebbles*), however, is very different in tone, scope, and audience. Rather than being composed by a socially connected cleric for an aristocratic audience in the immediate environs of the capital, *A Collection of Sand and*

Pebbles is a more provincial and much less formal work. The compiler Mujū Ichien (1226–1312) was a Rinzai Zen monk, and his setsuwa collection evinces much of the humor and dry wit often associated with that school of Buddhism. For Mujū laughter is as powerful a source of religious awakening as poetic sorrow. His stories often begin on a wry and humanist note, with headings such as “The Monk Whose Wife Tried to Kill Him,” and may take comic unexpected turns, as when, in the midst of a death rehearsal ceremony, the layman dressed as the buddha Amida farts, leading the laymen costumed as Amida’s attendants Seishi and Kannon to collapse in a fit of giggles.²⁸ Mujū’s comic and quotidian turn presages trends that became more pronounced in the later medieval period and its literary affection for instances of the low overcoming the high (Jp: *gekokuujō*). His collection also suggests the other literary venues that setsuwa themes and tropes would come to occupy after the 1200s, when the setsuwa genre gave way to newer literary forms, such as companion tales (Jp: *otogi zōshi*) and vernacular tracts (Jp: *kana hōgo*). Finally, *A Collection of Sand and Pebbles* indicates a growing sensitivity to differing motivations and objectives underlying the performance of sermonizing. For Mujū, the paradigmatic distinction has to do with whether one preaches to earn reward (payment or, more nebulously, reputation) or one preaches to spread the teachings of Buddhism. As others have argued, the late twelfth century also witnessed other shifts in motivation and objective, with the growth both of more “histrionic” styles of sermonizing aimed at “entertainment” and, counterbalancing that, the establishment of formal lineages of preaching, such as the Agui school, which I examine below.²⁹

Aside from being a good storyteller, Mujū was the head priest of the Chōbōji temple, which lay off the Eastern Sea Road (Tōkaidō), the main highway connecting the aristocratic capital at Heian with the military capital at Kamakura. Though he may well have had dealings with various authorities in the military structure, most of Mujū’s parishioners were rather lower-ranking and even included families of local beggars. According to Mujū’s Tokugawa period (1600–1868) biographers, he taught a young man named Tokuwaka how to do *owari manzai*, a special New Year’s dance in which a person would go from house to house handing out pine branches, dancing, and accepting alms. Tokuwaka and his brother lived with their father (their mother having died) and eked out a living as street and garden sweepers, an occupation that marks them as clinging to the very lowest rungs of the social ladder.³⁰ Mujū’s collection speaks much less directly about textual culture (and much more about preaching and other forms of performance), which probably has as much to do with his personal preferences for humor and his desire to bring

new material into the setsuwa tradition as it does with the social makeup of his congregation and their presumed literacy levels. After all, sutras do not require that one be literate in order to worship them.

As the title suggests, the *Collection of Sand and Pebbles* is a “collection” in the most expansive sense, drawing almost at random from personal experience, the sermons of others, hearsay, and local gossip to form a text that is very loosely organized into thematic units. Any given heading may contain a single setsuwa or may be vastly expanded as Mujū connects story after story in something approximating a stream-of-consciousness fashion. During the composition itself Mujū was forced to set the text aside several times, sometimes for the better part of a year, before picking it up again, making his collection more like the *Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution*, with its impulsive and surprising links between stories, than the streamlined, aristocratic productions of *The Three Jewels* and *A Companion in Solitude*.³¹

A SNAPSHOT OF THE GENRE

As is readily apparent, the setsuwa collections considered in this study represent a wide variety of organizational schemes, audience orientations, textual histories, languages of composition, and levels of formality. It is partially due to this remarkable variety that setsuwa have not received widespread critical attention in the West, though they are the subject of a booming field of academic inquiry in Japan. Still, one can point to some generic trends. First, with the exception of the earliest compilation, *A Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution*, and the last one examined here, *A Collection of Sand and Pebbles*, all of the collections spin out of centers of aristocratic culture in or near the imperial capital of Heiankyō (modern Kyōto). Thus, though they may take as their protagonists people from a wide range of social classes, these texts reflect most strongly the cultural milieu of the nobility and the premium that culture placed on artistic sophistication as well as its awareness of the emotional highs and lows of amorous pursuit and the sometimes harsh realities of politics.

We can also make some generalizations regarding authorship, which breaks down into roughly three categories. Texts compiled by laity (*The Three Jewels*, *Tales from Times Now Past*, and *A Collection of Treasures*) tend toward the encyclopedic. These highly structured collections are the product of a social class flush with education, leisure time, and financial resources, and their textual projects seem particularly interested in netting the sum total of Buddhism in neatly abstracted form. Texts compiled by clerics for professional purposes

(*A Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution, Miracles of the Lotus Sutra, One Hundred Sessions of Sermons, and A Collection of Sand and Pebbles*) tend to be less well-integrated and more narrowly focused on themes that would attract interest and would inspire or maintain faith. These collections appear to be handbooks of tales for use in sermonizing. Finally, two of the texts (*A Collection of Spiritual Awakenings* and *A Companion in Solitude*) are intensely personal in nature and appear to have been composed, at least initially, for an exclusive audience, either the author himself or a specific individual to whom he was related. These provide the most richly poetic passages, at times a dense brocade of allusion and metaphor, and they also supply more extended meditations on the meanings of the *setsuwa* they convey.

CHASING MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS

Modern Japanese *setsuwa* scholars tend to use a consistent rhetoric of embodiment to describe the texts with which they work. Komatsu Kazuhiko, for instance, writes that "events are the seed [Jp: *tane*] for *setsuwa* and ideas their womb [Jp: *botai*],"³² a figuration that invokes the mechanics of sexual reproduction. Writing twenty years later, in 2001, Komine Kazuaki employs the exact same metaphor, though he specifies a different surrogate, when he writes that in the medieval period, "everyday conversations carried with them a significance as the wellspring or womb [Jp: *botai*] from which *setsuwa* were born."³³ In his choice of everyday conversation as the maternal body inside of which *setsuwa* grow, Komine echoes the assertions of Furuhashi Nobuyoshi, who has claimed that *setsuwa* have a "life span" (Jp: *seimei*)³⁴ that is specifically linked to and dependent upon human speech, as if *setsuwa* were a living substance passed along through word of mouth. Other *setsuwa* scholars, such as Komatsu Kazuhiko and Satō Akira, also identify *setsuwa* as an oral genre that is "stilled in writing" and can "reemerge in performance."³⁵

A somewhat more troubling metaphor for *setsuwa* characterizes the scholarly search for meaning in terms of an actively sexual conquest, employing the term *kaimami* to describe philological attempts to "peek between the fence slats," admiring *setsuwa* manuscripts as if each were an attractive lady who, according to the classical literary trope, the suitor-scholar is forbidden to see but whom he is nevertheless intent on ravishing, by force if necessary. For instance, Komine Kazuaki describes his excitement on first getting to touch the written form of an archived *setsuwa* manuscript in the following words. "I feel as if the living form and voice [of the *setsuwa*] float up toward me. Once they are spoken, transformed into voice, these written texts take on meaning, strik-

ing the listener's breast, plucking at the heart strings, so that one can truly understand and feel for oneself their meaning."³⁶ The passage comprises an eerie reenactment of Kaoru's conquest of Oigimi in *The Tale of Genji* and even references the strings that the woman touches, here translated in the metaphorical sense of "heart strings" but literally "koto strings," the koto being the musical instrument Oigimi was playing when she first attracted Kaoru's attention, leading eventually to his unwanted intrusion and (to modern, legal eyes) sexual assault of her.³⁷

This language of embodiment and sensual conquest is not peculiar to Japanese scholarship but rather is emblematic of modern philological approaches to, and imaginations of, medieval manuscripts. Writing on the literature of the European Middle Ages, for instance, Paul Zumthor has noted, "Every relationship we maintain with a text involves some latent eroticism. Only this dynamism puts the critical reader in a situation comparable to that of the medieval reader or listener, whose whole body, not only his visual and auditory faculties, was engaged in the reception of the text."³⁸ For Zumthor, erotic sensation provides an avenue to (or perhaps evidence of) an increasingly authentic experience on the part of the critic who is willing, even excited, to engage with the manuscript on physical as well as mental levels.

Though Zumthor is imminently aware of the shortcomings of this sort of romanticism as a critical approach,³⁹ he nevertheless seems unable to resist employing the occasional metaphor. For instance, in describing the inherent otherness of medieval texts, he notes, "It is through erudition that the discovery of otherness must pass. And from otherness comes the pleasure; there is pleasure only in the Other, a concrete, historical Other. Pleasure carries a trace of history: if my object is a loved woman, history is there in the very fact that she exists, *hic et nunc*. If the object is a medieval text, I must come to know its body; but that body will be uncovered for me only after my information is as complete as it can be."⁴⁰ Learning difficult and obscure medieval languages, familiarizing oneself with the history and religion and politics of medieval societies: all of these scholarly pursuits are for Zumthor a way of "uncovering" the text, as if each bit of linguistic and cultural knowledge strips away one more layer of clothing from the body of the text, ultimately leaving it naked before the scholarly eye. In an analytical survey of scholarship on medieval European manuscripts, Sarah Kay has pointed out the ubiquity of this erotic approach, noting, "One of the meanings of 'philology' is a loving attention to manuscript remains."⁴¹

I take seriously these modern scholarly figurations of medieval manuscripts and *setsuwa* texts precisely because the medieval compilers of *setsuwa* them-

selves often provided strikingly physical metaphors for describing their textual projects. In order to approach setsuwa in a way that is both accurate and sensitive to the nuances of medieval rhetoric, it is necessary to be explicit about the figurative ramifications of chosen metaphors and to untangle the sometimes violent romanticism of modern scholarship from the precise language of medieval setsuwa prefaces. Furthermore, setsuwa collections' choices of specific metaphorical language and figurative tropes are one of the few medieval sources to focus consistently on the dynamics of the preaching event. It is therefore important to document this rhetoric as accurately and as thoroughly as possible so that our analyses of Buddhist oration, which necessarily involve a certain amount of speculation and guesswork, nevertheless represent medieval conceptions of the relationships between speaker and audience, textuality and physicality, as precisely as possible.

In ways similar to (though by no means identical with) the rhetoric of contemporary scholars, medieval setsuwa compilers tend to describe their collections in terms of human physicality, at times working off a symbolic economy of ingestion, at other times identifying the textual corpus with the human body in ways that suggest a gentle undertone of the erotic. Often setsuwa compilers signal these brief passages of self-reflexivity by employing phrases such as, "It is my earnest wish that . . ." or "It is my hope . . .," or simply by appending the auxiliary verb *mu*, which indicates personal volition. Though many setsuwa collections (such as *Tales of Times Now Past*) contain no such remarks, when they do exist they are most often found in either the compiler's prefatory remarks or the colophon.

SWALLOWING FOOD AND MEDICINE

One of the most common ways setsuwa compilers conceptualized their literary projects was as a type of food or medicine, a substance to be ingested. In the closing sentences of *A Collection of Sand and Pebbles*, Mujū Ichien notes that his "true intention" (Jp: *hon'i*) is that the setsuwa in his collection serve as "seeds for the awakening of the heart of enlightenment and as nourishment for the practices of the Buddha's teachings" (NKBZ 52: 615). Whether ingested in the form of raw "seeds" of enlightenment or as fully grown, harvested, and prepared "nourishment," setsuwa are active substances that, once they have gained entry into the human body, will work to sustain that body like food.

Also working with the metaphor of physical ingestion of the Buddha's teachings via the mediating force of setsuwa, Minamoto no Tamenori, compiler of *The Three Jewels*, describes his collection in actively medicinal terms. In the

preface to his second volume, which focuses on the treasure of the dharma, Tamenori notes, "The Buddhist teachings which remain to us are just like medicine left by a physician. How is it that anyone could not be cured of the sickness of the passions? They are like jewels hidden [in one's garment] by a friend. In the end we shall surely awaken from the dark stupor of desire. . . . The sound of the [Buddhist] law is just like that of a poison drum: hearing it only once, the enemy, spiritual ignorance, is killed. The names of the sutras are just like the saplings of medicinal trees: barely recite them and the disease of endless transmigration is lifted" (SNKBT 31: 74-75, 76). In all of these similes, the Buddha's teachings represent a starting point: a medical regimen to be followed, a jewel to be discovered, a drum to be struck, or a sapling to be nurtured. To be effective, each needs its own intermediary: a nurse to tend the ill, a friend to hide the jewel, a drummer to beat the drum, or a gardener to tend the tree. I would argue that Tamenori here is suggesting that setsuwa—whether as recounted aloud by priests for a listening audience or presented in summarized format to be read by a captive one—represent the fulfillment of that potential: the medicine taken, the jewel found, the drum beaten and heard, the sapling grown and harvested. Ingesting the materials of setsuwa, whether orally (as medicine or purgative poison) or aurally (as drumbeats or the recited names of sutras), the audience is physically transformed from the inside out, cured of the "sickness" of their ignorance, purged of the "disease" and "stupor" of their passions. Importantly, Tamenori's similes conflate the imagery of ingestion with that of aurality, thus suggesting that his audience must actively ruminate on words that come into them through their ears.⁴²

Tamenori is asking the ill princess who is his primary audience to act as a complicit agent in her own embodied transformation. Here setsuwa are understood to be active substances that infiltrate the human body, working to alter it on the physical level. Even if the ultimate transformation is a spiritual one, it is described in somatic terms. Nor is Tamenori alone in utilizing medicinal metaphors to describe the curative powers of Buddhist oration. Writing two centuries later the compiler of *A Collection of Treasures* echoes this understanding of the Buddhist teachings as a medicine that, aurally ingested, can cure "the three poisonous illnesses of greed, anger, and ignorance" (SNKBT 40: 172).

In a culturally generalized sense, of course, this metaphor of the Buddhist teachings as medicinal substances relates both to the performance of sickness in the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* as well as to the "Medicinal Herbs" chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. These two texts were, not incidentally, among the most familiar Buddhist writings in classical and medieval Japan. The *Vimalakīrti Sutra* was

understood to have medicinal value in its own right, as was celebrated in the Vimalakīrti service held at Yamashinadera (Kōfukuji) in Nara. As part of the service, recitations of the sutra were believed to be effective for instantaneously curing illness.⁴³ Read aloud, the sutra is ingested aurally as medicinal and curative, a substance able to transform and heal the human body. The “Medicinal Herbs” chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* likewise belongs to the same figurative network of images, dealing as it does with a comparison of the Buddha’s teachings to a gentle rain that falls, its “infusions reaching everywhere. The grass and trees, the shrubs and forests, and the medicinal herbs—whether of small roots, stalks, branches, and leaves, or of middle-sized . . . or of large—and also all trees, great and small, whether high, intermediate or low, all receive some of it.”⁴⁴ In this soft rainfall of the Buddha’s teachings, his words shower equally, gently, and persistently on all things, soaking into them, being ingested by them, bringing them the nourishment required for renewed growth. When setsuwa compilers tap into this metaphor of curative sound, they understand their collections as carrying out, or at least making possible, this same sort of healing.

Chingen, compiler of *Miracles of the Lotus Sutra*, works through his ideas about the position of setsuwa vis-à-vis the human body and sacred text from a strikingly different angle, by inverting the image of healing in favor of a much more violent procedure for achieving wholeness. Mentioning the work (no longer extant) of a Song-era Chinese Tendai monk, he establishes precedents for a collection of tales concerning miracles of the *Lotus Sutra*, and he laments that earlier examples do not include any stories from Japan. In seeking to remedy that lack, Chingen notes that some tales were easy to gather, since they still regularly came up in conversation, while others, hidden in written histories and books, were much harder to find. He compares his textual search to that of Sessen Dōji, the “Himalaya Boy” who offered his own body to feed a hungry demon in return for half a *gāthā* of scripture. Like Sessen Dōji, who wrote the resulting complete verse all over nearby rocks and trees before preparing to be eaten, Chingen rejoices that his efforts have not been in vain and have resulted in *Miracles of the Lotus Sutra*. He ends the preface by asserting that his goal in creating the collection was not personal erudition but the hope of curing “the darkness of ignorance” in all beings (NKBT 7: 510).

GARDENING

Another popular way of conceptualizing setsuwa collections was to speak of them as seeds planted in gardens. In addition to comparing it to food and med-

icine, for instance, Tamenori also describes his *Three Jewels* as a seed that, introduced in the proper soil, generates an internalized landscape of spiritual fecundity. In his opening preface he writes that, having considered the fact that “the seeds of buddhahood arise through karmic connections, I have carefully gathered and written down the leaves of words of the forest of virtue and planted deeply the upright roots of the sapling of supreme enlightenment, whereupon the jeweled strand of my heart has broken and scattered over the precious gems of these words and the rain of my tears flows to the base of the watery stalk. It is my hope that, with this aspiration, [many] may be led along the path, even in ages to come” (SNKBT 31: 7). In this densely figurative landscape, the human heart serves as the fertile ground into which the seeds of buddhahood are planted. Sprouting leaves and developing a willowy stem in this springtime of the soul, the small sapling receives its water in the form of rapturous tears.

In addition to presenting a beautiful metaphor for religious awakening and growth, Tamenori’s comments also pose an intricate meditation on the relationship between textuality and spirituality. The image of a seed that grows in the human heart is not only a Buddhist one—in which case the seed is the kernel of buddhahood—but one intimately connected to Japanese poetic conceptions. The *Kokinwakashū* (*A Collection of Waka Ancient and Modern*), an imperially sponsored poetry anthology completed in 914, opens with the following sentence: “Taking the human heart as its seed, Japanese poetry has grown into countless leaves of words” (NKBT 8: 93). In this metaphor, Japanese poetry performs a complex melding of human sentiment, spoken word, and written word as the welling forth of emotion in the poet’s heart leads to the verbal composition of leaves of song, hundreds upon hundreds of which are gathered in written form in the anthology that itself figures as a lush forest.

Tamenori thus situates his setsuwa collection in the context of poetic expectations. His description is itself ornately poetic, depending upon an intricately woven net of semantically related words (Jp: *engo*) to express its full range of meaning, the sense of which is communicated as much on the levels of imagery and sensational response to beauty as on those of logical or grammatical association. The related words—“tears,” “rain,” “watery stalk,” and “flow”—work together to bind the sentence into a poetic whole as each image calls forth the expectation for the next. The composer’s tears allegorically translate into a gentle rain that nourishes the poetic seed of buddhahood, now sprouted into a willowy stalk around which the gathered waters flow. Furthermore, the word *mizukuki* (watery stalk), when used in an adverbial phrase, can also refer to

calligraphy written in a beautiful, flowing hand so that the water that flows around the sapling of enlightenment is associated not only with rain and tears but also with writing, as if the setsuwa compiler's salty tears flowed not from his eyes but from the tip of his brush.

Finally, Tamenori's description also draws on the imagery of a strand of jewels, representative of his heart, which breaks and scatters over the text, itself a collection of gems. Mary Carruthers, in her *Book of Memory*, discusses the image of the strand of pearls as a mnemonic device in medieval European (and particularly Christian) culture, in which case the jewels represent the treasure of the scriptures. Though Buddhist sutras are also commonly counted among the "three jewels" of Buddhism (to which Tamenori refers in his title), the suggestions implied by the image of a scattered strand of jewels in this case do not conform to Carruthers's hypotheses concerning memory, pointing rather to a sensation of emotional eruption more than one of calm recollection. In classical Japanese verse, poets often utilized the image of a broken strand of jewels in order to suggest the emotional and physical turmoil of erotic love. The *Man'yōshū* (*A Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves*), the progenitor of all Japanese poetry anthologies, contains a series of poems, all of which seize on this actively erotic suggestion. A typical offering reads: "The jeweled strand of my soul / broken and scattered with / the ending of our love— / even though we both should die / never shall we meet again."⁴⁵ Drawing on the ambiguity of the word *tama*, which can mean either "jewel" or "soul/spirit," the poem suggests an upwelling of passion that disorders the soul, much as the broken strand of a necklace sends its jewels scattering over the floor. In this light, Tamenori's connection to the text takes on a tinge of the erotic, and his emotional outburst, though it provides the tears that water the young tree of enlightenment, is as much a phenomenon of the senses as it is of the spirit.

The compiler of *A Collection of Treasures* draws on a similar associative net of botanical imagery in the comments with which he closes his setsuwa collection. The final tale in the series, which is studded throughout with *waka* poetry, refers briefly to the Indian practice of writing sutras on the backs of leaves from the *tāra* tree (SNKBT 40: 350), thus implicitly connecting the Buddhist practice of sutra copying with the Japanese practice of poetic composition as "the leaves of words." After making this flitting reference, the priest strikes a small bell, indicating the end of both his sermon and the setsuwa collection that documents it. The compiler (perhaps the word "author" is fitting here) then concludes with a few words of his own, explaining his intentions in composing *The Collection of Treasures*. He writes:

Originally, I longed for the scent of flowers and enjoyed the autumn foliage, gathering and writing down the leaves of words of many people [i.e. the *waka* that appear throughout the collection] and scattering them here and there in the way of the *Kokinshū*. . . . These poems soothe even the hearts of fearsome gods invisible to the eye, and make gentle the hearts of fierce warriors, just as is written in the preface of the *Kokinshū*. Truly, thinking on this, and with the kind favor of [the Shintō gods of poetry] Sumiyoshi and Tamatsushima, I have put my strength into [progressing along] this path crowded with people and I have prepared enough to create this single volume of writing. I have joyfully taken down these tales told before the Buddha [icon] and they should be called *A Collection of Treasures*. (SNKBT 40: 350–51)

The author here points to the power of poetry to emotively transform the individual human heart, calming it and turning it into a landscape that is capable of supporting Buddhist growth. By including these remarks as part of the colophon to his written setsuwa collection—all of which he has framed as the transcription of a preaching event—the compiler implicitly aligns his act of writing setsuwa with the devotional acts of sutra copying and Buddhist oration, as well as with the poetic act of composition, and he presents his writings as an offering to the Buddha, a practice that invokes both the sutra-based argument that the offering of the dharma is the highest offering and the Japanese practice of composing poetry at shrines and temples and then offering the transcripts to the chief enshrined deity.

SALT GATHERING

Other medieval setsuwa compilers also draw heavily on poetic tradition and the ornate language of poetic association in order to frame their compositional acts in a highly literate and emotionally concentrated context. Rather than working with botanical metaphors, these men focus instead on the pathos-ridden form of the salt gatherer. Keisei, for instance, concludes his *A Companion in Solitude* with the following: "When I started to write down these two volumes of notes . . . I was ashamed and even thought I ought to put away my inkstone, but when I considered the saturated robes of the divers and that I had already let it be heard that I would finish gathering up this salty seaweed, somehow I was able to pick up my brush again. It is my hope that [this collection] be offered before forgiving eyes and that it not be spread about [to encounter] other than understanding hearts" (SNKBT 40: 452–53).

In this passage Keisei figures himself as a salt gatherer. Generally among the poorest and most destitute, these seaside dwellers specialized in diving, plunging into the cold depths of the sea in order to cut strands of kelp free from their roots at the ocean's bottom. Using bonfires of driftwood and dried reeds to extract the salt from the seaweed, the gatherers eked out a meager hand-to-mouth existence. The associative net of imagery in this case draws together the words for "salty seaweed," "diver," "gather up," and "saturated robes" in order to call up vivid imagery of this melancholy coastal scene. Keisei deftly turns this literary landscape into a metaphor for his own writing by suggesting a poetically common potential double meaning in which the word *kakiagu* indicates both the act of "gathering" seaweed (Jp: *kaku*, literally "raking together") and the act of "writing" (Jp: *kaku*, homophonous, but written with a different character). In this sense, Keisei identifies himself with the divers, hoping that "forgiving eyes" will be able to find the salt of the Buddhist teachings that he, in a topos of humility, feels that he has so crudely extracted from the collected seaweed of his *setsuwa*.

Mujū Ichien, in his preface to *A Collection of Sand and Pebbles*, summons this same net of images. Using a pun on the phrase "reeds and canes" (Jp: *yoshi ashi*), which is homophonous with "good and bad" (Jp: *yoshi ashi*, written with different characters), Mujū cleverly weaves the language of his own sense of purpose into the imagery of the oceanside topos. He writes, "Following my memories of things seen and heard just as they have arisen, I have let my hands gather where they will, bringing together the salty seaweed without regard for the good or bad, without separating out the reeds and canes of the bay at Naniwa" (NKBZ 52: 19). Several sentences later he explains the title he has chosen for his collection through the following analogy: "Those who wish for gold sift through sand to find it, and [those who wish to] polish jewels break open rocks to collect them. Thus [I call these writings] *A Collection of Sand and Pebbles*" (NKBZ 52: 20). Employing rhetorically self-abasing language, Mujū places himself in the role of a humble salt gatherer while also alluding to the process of extraction that both he and his readers will need to undergo, metaphorically breaking open the rock of his *setsuwa* collection to find the gems of the Buddhist teachings or burning away the dross of the seaweed in order to harvest the salt held within.

Both Keisei and Mujū thus figure themselves as salt gatherers. Though each of the passages is carefully gender neutral, in classical Japanese literature the diver is almost always female and her character is often tinged with more than a little erotic appeal. The Noh play *Ama* (The diver), for instance, features an encounter with the ghost of a female diver. She recounts her own personal

history, first telling how she conceived a son with a certain visiting minister of state (who then returned to the capital with the child, but not with her) and then continuing with the story of her death. Having tied a rope about her waist, she dives deep into the sea to retrieve a precious jewel, asking the people in the boat to pull her up when they feel a tug on the line. Just as she is running out of breath, she finds the jewel lying on the bottom of the sea. Realizing that she will lose consciousness before reaching the surface, she takes her knife, slices a gash in her body just under her breast, inserts the jewel into her chest, and tugs on the rope. After being hauled back into the boat, she regains her senses just long enough to tell those present to pull back the fold of skin below her breast and to reach into her chest cavity to find the jewel she has hidden there.

The jewel in question is a famous religious artifact said to contain an ever-present image of the historical Buddha, and the diving woman has retrieved it in exchange for the promise that her son will be educated and introduced into the courtly ranks. Thus, the revelation of the jewel within her breast suggests a referral back to the birth of her son, while the searching fingers that probe her chest cavity might be linked back to the moment of sexual union. Though the Noh play itself dates to no earlier than the mid-fourteenth century, it is based on the earlier medieval collection *Sanshū Shido Dōjō Engi* (*The Sacred Origins of the Holy Places of Shido in Sanuki Province*). As with Minamoto no Tamenori's imagery of the broken strand of jewels, Keisei and Mujū's use of the diver as a metaphor for their editorial activities also summons up an erotic subtext. For these male authors this subtext implies a shift of both class and gender, suggesting a greater fluidity in the economy of desire and a more marked humility in the process of pursuit than that allowed for by the metaphors of *kaimami* pursuit.

PREACHING

While in the case of salt gathering it is the compiler who takes on specific physicality, other *setsuwa* collections figure the written compilation itself as an embodied presence. For instance Kyōkai, author of *A Miraculous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution*, describes his text as a physical proxy, an embodied stand-in for his own priestly figure. Concerned with how his work will be accepted by people in times and places distant from his own, Kyōkai clarifies his intentions in creating the collection, writing, "In editing this collection of strange and miraculous events, I want to pull people forward with my spoken words, seize their hands and lead them forward, cleanse their feet and guide

them on, so that all of us together may leave this world and be born in the western paradise, living together in the jeweled hall of heaven" (NKBBZ 10: 245). In other words, Kyōkai seems to want his writings to work as a human body interacting with other human bodies. He wants the words of his compilation to enter into people, pulling them forward by force; he graces his collection with hands so that it may grasp hold of the hands of others, wash their feet of evil, and guide them to physical rebirth in the western paradise. In short, Kyōkai's collection is meant to act like a preacher, speaking to and physically touching people, guiding them along the Buddhist path.

Minamoto no Tamenori intended his *The Three Jewels* to work in a similar way. Compiled for the express use of an ailing imperial princess, Tamenori's collection was meant to serve as a physical proxy. Unable to attend lectures and sermons on her own, too sick to visit sacred architectural locales or worship their devotional images in person, she was presented with Tamenori's text as a substitute: if she could not go to them, the priests, services, and devotional settings would come to her, in textual format. Tamenori is very careful to ensure that the princess not feel alone in this, pointing out that there are no buddha or bodhisattva bodies left for any of us to see (except in the form of relics) and encouraging her in the belief that "since the Three Jewels are all one and the same, you should revere and worship them all equally" (SNKBT 31: 136). Contemplating the texts of Buddhism therefore accrues the same amount of merit as attending Buddhist services, an act that Tamenori promises will erase all of one's sin and allow one actually to see the Buddha's physical form in its entirety.

MATCHMAKING

Finally, both Mujū and Kamo no Chōmei describe their setsuwa collections as matchmakers or go-betweens, that is, as older women (Jp: *nakadachi*, which is gender-specific) who take on the responsibility of pairing others with appropriate mates. In the preface to his *Collection of Spiritual Awakenings*, Kamo no Chōmei includes the following remarks: "I have fathomed my own shallow heart and, without searching for any particularly deep dharma, I have jotted down things I have seen and heard, quietly placing [these notes] to the right of my cushion. Regarding that which is noble, I sincerely hope that they act as karmic connections, and regarding that which is foolish, I have sought to fashion myself a renewed matchmaker" (SNKS 44). Placing his collection to the right of his cushion, near his armrest where he could pick it up and peruse it at ease, Chōmei hopes that the wise portions of his text may serve as a

direct link connecting him to the Buddha, and that those portions that may yet reflect his ignorance might nevertheless negotiate on his behalf. In his figuration he searches and consults with the text as a man might seek the counsel of an older woman in order to find a suitable bride.

Writing nearly seventy years later, Mujū elaborates on this basic image of the text as a marital go-between in his preface to *A Collection of Sand and Pebbles*. "Those who wish to look upon [this collection] without ridiculing its clumsy expressions shall be enlightened concerning the doctrines and teachings of Buddhism. Those who do not scrutinize its unevenness shall learn to discern karmic cause and effect. It shall serve as a matchmaker, leading them from the village of birth and death; it shall be as a friend, accompanying them to the city of Nirvana. Such are the wishes of a foolish old man."⁴⁶ Mujū embroiders upon Chōmei's rather plain image of the text-reader relationship as a marital consultation, expanding the sphere of familiarity and allowing for a more widespread textual intimacy. No longer simply for the purposes of its compiler's personal self-improvement, Mujū's text is addressed, even in this instance, to a larger audience.

In the patrilineal marital culture of thirteenth-century Japan, the reader and the compiler of setsuwa texts find themselves in a feminized position, as in the salt-gathering metaphor. If the image of the text is that of a go-between, the image of the reader is that of a new bride for whom the textual matchmaker has secured a lifelong committed relationship to the Buddhist teachings, requiring that the reader/bride relocate to a new home. Mujū's figuration functions as a spatial metaphor in which the believer processes along the Buddhist path, leaving behind the familiar world of birth and death for the shining capital of Nirvana.

SETSUWA AS LIVING TEXTS

Obviously, setsuwa compilers conceived of their texts in a variety of ways and according to a wide range of figurations. At times, compilers imagined their collections as substances to be ingested, either orally (as food or medicine) or aurally (as drumbeats or recited words). Setsuwa may also serve to implant and nourish the seeds of buddhahood, transforming the believer's heart into a lush landscape of trees of enlightenment, leaves of words, and streams of tears. They may serve as guides or mentors, as friends, matchmakers, or forceful priests. Finally, setsuwa sensationalize—and may also sexualize and feminize—the listening or reading body, figuring it as a new bride or as a diver dripping with the salt of the sea.

In short, setsuwa act both *on* the human body and *as* a human body. In contrast to modern scholarly rhetoric, medieval Buddhist descriptions do not focus on the birth or sexual conquest of setsuwa; rather, they focus on the ability of setsuwa to harbor within themselves (as salt or gems, gold or seeds) the teachings of the Buddha. Though metaphorical descriptions of setsuwa collections do at times flirt with the language of the erotic, setsuwa are never figured as bodies to be conquered and are not subject to amorous conquest. (Recall here that the image of the diver is offered not as a metaphor for the setsuwa text but as a metaphor for its compiler!) Instead, setsuwa may excite in their readers and compilers an intense passion for spiritual growth. Thus, the erotic is linked not to academic discovery but to religious maturation. Finally, while setsuwa most certainly do have life, setsuwa never die. It is not they who are reborn when we read them aloud, but we who (ideally) are activated and animated when we come into contact with them.

SETSUWA IN PERFORMANCE

While setsuwa collections mostly concern themselves with supplying examples of what to say, they also provide glimpses of when, where, and how their tales were used in the context of Buddhist services. The extraordinary *Notes on One Hundred Sessions of Sermons* provides us the richest record in this regard, and it tells us that by the early 1100s there was a network of clerics who had been identified as particularly talented preachers (Jp: *nōsetsu*). These men could be engaged to provide sermons as part of Buddhist ceremonies that, as in the case of *One Hundred Sessions of Sermons*, might involve the creation and dedication of a sutra, most often the *Lotus*.⁴⁷ In the *One Hundred Sessions of Sermons* setsuwa, preachers often reference parenthetically quotes, titles, and excerpts of sutras, suggesting that it was also common practice to read aloud one or more sutra passages before the sermon commenced and to key the sermon both to the merit-producing project of the sponsoring patron and to specific material from the sutras read.

While *One Hundred Sessions of Sermons* provides a snapshot of a successful sermonizing event at the imperial court, where proper etiquette was de rigueur, it is much more common for setsuwa to suggest the norms of their underlying performance context through stories about services that were somehow unusual. For instance, Kamo no Chōmei's *A Collection of Spiritual Awakenings* relates the story of an official government steward of Sanuki province in a setsuwa that also appears in *Tales from Times Now Past* and *A Collection of Treasures*, meaning that the tale was in active circulation for at least a

century between the early 1100s and the early 1200s. Despite his high birth and clan association—the steward is a member of the Minamoto, an offshoot of the imperial line—this man knows nothing of Buddhism, “not even its name.” (SNKS 132). He takes great delight in killing animals, catching fish, and maiming people, and he is the terror of his domain. One day, riding home from the kill, he happens across a crowd standing outside a house straining to listen to something going on inside. He asks one of his retainers what is happening. His man explains that it is a Buddhist dedication ceremony, to which the steward responds that he has never seen such a thing before. He dismounts his horse and, still in his hunting gear, pushes through a crowd of people standing in the street. Squeezing into the courtyard garden, he finds himself amidst a throng of seated people who start to flee when they see him.

The steward shoulders his way up to the presiding priest (Jp: *dōshi*), plops down on the ground, and demands that the cleric explain what has been happening. The monk, “sorely afraid, summarized his sermon thus far: the vows made by Amida, the joys of the Pure Land, the pains of this world, the condition of transience, and so forth” (SNKS 134), to which the steward listened closely. Then, rough-spoken and impulsive as ever, he proclaims that he has been moved and demands that the priest shave his head on the spot. When the priest suggests that he wait a few days, the steward sees this as a challenge to his resolve and draws his sword. The layman sponsoring the service nearly faints and the priest shakes uncontrollably but loans the steward vestments, shaves the man's head, and ordains him immediately.⁴⁸

As with *One Hundred Sessions of Sermons*, we can discern a set of liturgical norms operating in the background of this story, and in fact the steward's exaggerated actions help to draw out some of these expectations. First, a lay believer (in this case, a provincial landowner) has arranged for a Buddhist service to be held in conjunction with his donation of some unspecified object (perhaps a statue or a sutra). Second, the dedication service is a public affair that draws a large crowd. Third, at least some of the assembly seats itself at a level below that of the orator, on the ground in the garden. This helps his voice to carry, even to the street outside. Next, the officiating priest, after taking care of the dedication portion of the service, also delivers a lengthy sermon in which he covers a number of standard topics. Finally, while he is speaking the members of the crowd (who, in any case, are not to have shown up with flecks of blood on their clothing) are supposed to remain seated, still, and quiet, rather than interrupting with questions as the steward does.

Setsuwa from other collections underscore many of these same expectations. A story from *A Companion in Solitude*, compiled about a decade later, fea-

with the altar and devotional images behind him. This means that the audience's view of the preacher will be framed by Buddhist icons (usually a triad) that face the audience from over the orator's shoulders. In the less formal instance, this visual framing—and its attendant hierarchy—would be less dominant. Additionally, the acoustics of the more informal service must have been less satisfactory, particularly for members of larger audiences, who might have found their line of sight to be obscured by pillars, sliding doors and panels, and even walls, as suggested in the *setsuwa* about the rude hunter cited above.

While in the case of simpler services the officiating priest might play all the roles, more formal ceremonies could entail quite an elaborate cast of characters. Under the officiating priest, who was chiefly in charge of conducting the ritual (the dedication of a new image, for example), one might find a monk whose specific role was to read the sutras with the proper Chinese intonation (Jp: *kyōshi*), another to read Sanskrit text (Jp: *baishi*), a third to vocalize beautifully melismatic passages (Jp: *shōmyōshi*), and a fourth to provide the closing lecture or sermon in which *setsuwa* would have been employed (Jp: *kōshi*). These men might be attended by any number of other monks, often young disciples with preparatory duties (lighting incense, placing candles, ensuring the venue was properly prepared, etc.). Regardless of the level of formality, the chief officiant was to be seated in proximity to the patron (Jp: *danna*), with the remainder of the audience arrayed as circumstances allowed.

THE LITURGY

In terms of the actual order of events, Shinjō begins with the arrival of the palanquin at the hall (which may be a temple or home chapel). All monks involved in the service enter the structure by rank, with the officiating priest last, giving his disciples time to prepare the hall by lighting incense and candles. The priest and congregants perform obeisance, bowing toward the devotional images a minimum of three times in recognition of the Three Jewels (the Buddha, the dharma of his teachings, and the sangha of believers). Then, right foot first, the officiating priest mounts a central dais.⁵² He faces away from the audience and toward the devotional images, with a sutra rest immediately in front of him and a small gong (Jp: *kei*) and ritual implements on either side. Settling himself, he strikes the gong with his right hand. Shinjō notes that as soon as the officiating priest bows for the first time, the assembled laity "should be seated and quiet, to remain so from this point forward."⁵³

Preliminaries accomplished, the purpose of the service (for instance, the dedication of a newly produced sutra) is announced with a slow, chanted ca-

dence, the end of the sentence dropping in pitch and volume. The *Heart Sutra* is recited as an offering to local deities and the priest invokes various buddhas, bodhisattvas, and native Shintō deities, calling on their protection. He then dedicates the merit of the service to the salvation of all beings, especially the patron. If the patron has provided a document detailing his or her reasons for holding the ceremony (Jp: *hyōbyaku*), the priest reads this aloud, concluding with a formal prayer or request (Jp: *ganmon*). Shinjō instructs, "Read this quietly, with the portion containing the specific request in a slightly louder voice, but not as loudly as when preaching."⁵⁴ The priest finishes by reading aloud the year and date, rerolling the document, and placing it to the side. If the occasion of the ceremony is the dedication of a new sutra, the priest reads all or part of that sutra (which is on the desk before him) at this point.

Having concluded this portion of the service, the priest now changes audiences, from the divine to the human. Facing his listeners, he intones the title of the scripture to be explicated and the sutra passage for the day. Following this, he delivers some celebratory words (Jp: *kyōge*) in which, among other things, he may praise the powers of the sutra from which he (or another officiant) has just read, or he may speak about the qualities of one or more of the buddhas whose images are installed in the temple. Moving into the sermon proper, he may homilize on the topic of meritorious acts and the cultivation of one's good moral roots, or cover any of the other many subjects addressed in *setsuwa* collections. Judging from the material in *One Hundred Sessions of Sermons*, at times the connection between the sermon and the sutra text is quite explicit, while at other times the link is more distant, even tenuous. The orator signals the conclusion of the sermon with a dedication of merit. He then strikes the gong and descends the platform to accept donations, which may include cloth, brocade, swords, oxen, horses, and so on.

STANDING BETWEEN

As we can see from Shinjō's description, Buddhist sermonizing events (whether the more formal ceremonies or the less elaborate services) have several discrete parts that speak to different audiences. In each of these liturgical moments the presiding cleric functions as a pivot, standing between the devotees seated below him and the powerful beings (buddhas and sutras) to which he raises his eyes. In the first portion of the liturgy the officiant speaks from his own position as a ritual specialist, invoking buddhas and deities and drawing their attention to the specific time and place of the event. Much of this portion of the service would be linguistically opaque for all but the most highly educated

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. This passage appears in the *Kōzanji Myōe shōnin gyōjō*, an account of Myōe's deeds focusing on his time at Kōzanji, in the mountains at the edge of the Heian capital. This translation is adapted slightly from George Tanabe, *Myōe the Dreamkeeper: Fantasy and Knowledge in Early Kamakura Buddhism*, 60.

2. For more on this dream, see Nomura Takumi, "Myōe no shashingyō to kotoba," 30 ff. For an English-language study of Myōe and his dreams, see Tanabe, *Myōe the Dreamkeeper*.

3. "The Phrase *sa prthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet* in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna" in Gregory Schopen, *Fragments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India: More Collected Papers*, 25–62. I discuss Schopen's theory in more detail in chapter 1. The basic argument, simplified here for the sake of brevity, is that Mahāyāna distinguished itself by establishing cultic centers organized around written sutras that were recited, worshipped, and circumambulated. For later qualifications to his original argument, see Schopen's "On Sending Monks Back to Their Books: Cult and Conservatism in Early Mahāyāna Buddhism," in the same volume, and his entry on "Mahāyāna" in Robert Buswell, Jr., *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, especially his comment that the "cult of the book" was not an "attempt by the 'new' [Mahāyāna] movement to substitute one similar cult (the cult of the book) for another similar cult (the cult of relics)" but was likely meant instead "to shift the religious focus . . . to doctrine, to send monks, nuns, and even laymen quite literally back to their books" (497).

4. Konta Yōzō, Nagatomo Chiyoji, and Maeda Ai are leading scholars. For summative accounts of the state of the field in Japan, see Peter Kornicki and Henry D. Smith II. There is a vast secondary literature in Japanese dealing with issues of calligraphy and the illustration, circulation, and dedication of manuscripts from which I draw freely, and gratefully, in this study. Nevertheless, far more needs to be done, and in a more interdisciplinary manner, before the "history of the book" in pre-Tokugawa Japan becomes clear.

5. For studies of Japan see Peter Kornicki, Henry D. Smith II, and Mary Elizabeth Berry. Research on Chinese print culture has been much more active. See Cynthia Brokaw, Kai-Wing Chow, Susan Cherniack, John H. Winkelman, and Tsien Tsuen-Hsuei. Tsien is one of the few scholars working consistently before the twelfth century.

6. Henri-Jean Martin, Lucien Febvre, Roger Chartier, G. Thomas Tanselle, Robert Darnton, and Elizabeth Eisenstein have been among the most active in developing this field.

7. For instance, Roger Chartier wrote in 1995, "More than ever, perhaps, one of the critical tasks of the great libraries is to collect, to protect, to inventory (for example, in the form of collective national catalogues, the first step toward retrospective national bibliographies), and, finally, to make accessible the kinds of books that have been those of men and women who have read since the first centuries of the Christian era, the kinds of books that are still our own. Only by preserving the understanding of our culture of the codex may we wholeheartedly realize the 'extravagant happiness' promised by the screen" (*Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer*, 24). Chartier's linkage of the national bibliography with the history of the book is typical, the field of book history having developed more or less directly out of the Annales school and the Bibliothèque de France project. The connection between book history and the development of a national vernacular may be operative in East Asia as well. For further discussion, see the conclusion of this book and Victor H. Mair, "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages."

8. Jerome McGann is the leading proponent of this type of textual scholarship, which he terms "the textual condition." See also D. C. Greetham and, for a separate development of the "sociology of text," D. F. McKenzie.

9. Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition*, 21.

10. The key texts here are by F. W. Bateson, René Wellek and Austin Warren, James McLaverty, and Peter Shillingsburg.

11. James McLaverty, "The Mode of Existence of Literary Works of Art: The Case of the Dunciad Variorum," 82.

12. Silk screens, lithographs, and woodblock prints offer interesting challenges to this admittedly simplified schema.

13. For models of how to accomplish this, I am indebted to studies of medieval

Christendom, such as Mary Carruthers's work on memory, Jody Enders's on theater and rhetoric, Bruce Holsinger's on the desire for polyphony, and Martin Irvine's on textual culture. I have also been encouraged by Charles Hallisey's characterizations of Buddhism as both a "translocal tradition" and a "transcultural phenomenon" in "Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravāda Buddhism" (51).

14. The phrase is Chartier's. He argues that the shift from monastic learning to the urban school "changed everything," including "the method of reading, which ceased to be participation in the mystery of the Sacred Word, and became a regulated and hierarchized decoding of the letter (*littera*), the sense (*sensus*), and the doctrine (*sententia*)" (*Forms and Meanings*, 16-17).

15. In framing the text as negotiated meaning rather than as artifact, scholarship of the textual condition resonates strongly with anthropological and performance studies approaches to language as "a species of situated human communication" (Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*, 8), exemplified by people like Clifford Geertz, Richard Bauman, and Victor Turner in anthropology and Richard Schechner, Elizabeth Fine, Diana Taylor, and Peggy Phelan in performance studies. My concern here is not with "performative" language (as defined by J. L. Austin and pursued by thinkers like Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler), though I do recognize and elucidate the rhetorical power of various tropes, metaphors, and figures in later chapters. Rather, my concern is with language (sutras and setsuwa, specifically) as used in a performance context (preaching).

16. Or, to invoke another metaphor, the concentrated mind (Jp: *isshin*) is analogous to a clean, blank writing surface, and the voice, as it intones the sutras, acts like a writing instrument, transcribing the words from the scroll onto the ledger of memory.

17. David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book*, 117-18.

18. The phrase appears in the introduction to his *Inscription and Erasure: Literature and Written Culture from the Eleventh to the Eighteenth Century*, ix.

19. For treatments of setsuwa as folklore or oral literature, see Komine Kazuaki, Komatsu Kazuhiko, Kawada Junzō, Nishimura Satoshi, and Yamashita Kin'ichi. For the place of setsuwa in Japanese national literature see Konishi Jin'ichi. For its use as raw material for histories of people, places, and practices, see Rajyashree Pandey, *Writing and Renunciation in Medieval Japan: The Works of the Poet-Priest Kamo no Chōmei*; Laurel Rasplia Rodd, "Nichiren and Setsuwa"; Frederic Kotas "The Craft of Dying in Late Heian Japan"; and the work of Fukuda Akira, Furuhashi Nobuyoshi, Gokoji Tsutomu, Kikuchi Hiroki, Murakami Manabu, and Saeki Shin'ichi. For setsuwa and popular religious culture, see Hirota Tetsumichi, Nakai Katsumi, Satō Kenzō, and Shiba Kayono.

20. See Kyoko Motomichi-Nakamura, Edward Kamens, Yoshiko K. Dykstra, Marian Ury, and Robert Morrell.

21. For the impact of these continental forms on Japanese tales, see Yoshiko K. Dykstra, "The Japanese Setsuwa and the Indian Avadāna"; Robert Campney,

Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China; and Donald Gjerston, *Miraculous Retribution: A Study and Translation of Tang Lin's Ming Pao Chi*.

22. Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory*, 15. For textual communities see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*.

23. "Chanting and Liturgy," in Robert Buswell, Jr., *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, 137.

24. For discussions of Buddhist liturgy, see Nagai Yoshinori, Fukuda Akira, and Satō Michiko. For excellent studies of sutra chanting as an aesthetic pursuit linked to "skilled preaching" (Jp: *nōsetsu*), see Shiba Kayono and Shimizu Masumi.

25. For the most part, preachers seem to have preferred to extemporize rather than to read from prepared notes. Dōgen's essays, some of which were delivered as spoken teachings to an assembly of his students, are one exception to this trend. In addition, whereas most recorded *setsuwa* are rough sketches or kernels of stories, the twelfth-century Japanese collection *Notes Taken While Listening to One Hundred Sessions of Sermons (Hyakuza Hōdan Kikigakishō)* is unusual in that it contains several examples of what seem to be entire sermons, transcribed more or less as delivered. For more on this collection, see chapter 2.

26. Occasionally, one sees the term *setsuwa* used in a very wide folkloric sense to indicate a common narrative that is broadly attested in numerous variant forms: for instance, the "Cinderella *setsuwa*" or the "Urashima Tarō *setsuwa*." For early analyses of *setsuwa* as a folkloric genre, see Saitō Kiyoe, Matsumura Takeo, Kawaguchi Hisao, Fujita Tokutarō, Kazamaki Keijirō, Katayose Masayoshi, Kunisaki Fumimaro, Nishio Kōichi, and Suzuki Tōzō. For a discussion of the origin and range of the term *setsuwa* in Japanese scholarship, see Komine Kazuaki, *Setsuwa no mori: chūsei no tengu kara Isoppu made*, 298–302; Hisamatsu Sen'ichi, *Shinpan Nihon bungakushi*, vol. 3, 195–96; and D. E. Mills, *A Collection of Tales from Uji: A Study and Translation of Uji Shūi Monogatari*, 1–4.

27. As translated by Stephen Miller and Patrick Donnelly, *The Wind from Vulture Peak: Origins of Buddhist Poetry in the Japanese Court Tradition*. The poem appears in the twelfth-century *Senzaishū* imperial poetry anthology. SNKBT 10: poem #1250.

28. For more on *yūya nenbutsu* and the role of *hijiri* in constructing public baths, see Nakao Takashi, *Chūsei no kanjin hijiri to shari shinkō*, 4 ff. Building baths was one of the activities in which *hijiri*, wandering Buddhist monks who commonly coordinated public works projects, often engaged. See Janet Goodwin, *Alms and Vagabonds: Buddhist Temples and Popular Patronage in Medieval Japan*.

29. See Goodwin, *Alms and Vagabonds*, 107–41, and John Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*, 199–219, for more on Buddhist bridge building. As Goodwin notes, explaining the popularity of these projects, "Efforts aimed simultaneously to save people's souls and to improve their welfare must have been more powerful in spreading Buddhism than those directed only toward the soul or toward the purse" (*Alms and Vagabonds*, 141).

30. Konishi Jin'ichi, *A History of Japanese Literature*, vol. 3, *The High Middle Ages*, 126.

31. Campano, *Strange Writing*, 3.

32. *Ibid.*, 323. To an extent, even triply foreign, as Robert Buswell, Jr., reminds us, given that the first Japanese encounter with Buddhism came through a Korean envoy. See his *Currents and Countercurrents: Korean Influences on East Asian Buddhist Traditions*.

33. Alan Cole, *Text as Father: Paternal Seductions in Early Mahāyāna Buddhist Literature*, 9.

34. The phrase is Robert Morrell's, in *Sand and Pebbles (Shasekishū): The Tales of Mujū Ichien, A Voice for Pluralism in Kamakura Buddhism*.

35. Here I am invoking William LaFleur's suggestion that, for the purposes of literary and cultural studies, periods should be bounded not by politics and governmental developments, but rather by ideas and concepts, a "basic intellectual and religious shape" (emphasis in original) (*The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan*, 9).

36. Pandey, *Writing and Renunciation in Medieval Japan*, 1.

37. See Kuroda Toshio and Taira Masayuki. For two representative studies of medieval practices that span Heian and Kamakura and suggest that later *praxes* elaborated on earlier models, see Brian Ruppert on relic worship and Robert H. Sharf and Elizabeth Horton Sharf on icon veneration.

38. For more on the use of *jātaka* and *avadāna* in teaching the dharma in India, see Joel Tatelman, *The Glorious Deeds of Pūrna: A Translation and Study of the Pūrnavadāna*, 4, and John Strong, *The Legend of King Asoka*, 22; for their use in China, see Victor Mair, "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia," 713.

39. The phrase comes from Walt Whitman's poem "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" but aptly captures the classical Japanese metaphor offered by Kūkai (774–835), founder of the Japanese Shingon school and a foundational theoretician of word and text. In one of his essays positing the interpenetration of writing, sound, gesture, and absolute reality, he writes, "The mantras are the woof, the sacred mudras are the warp, and the *samādhi* is the shuttle; they weave the brocade of the ocean-like assembly [i.e., mandala] greatly admired by sentient beings" (as cited in Fabio Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality: A Cultural History of Objects in Japanese Buddhism*, 118).

I. THE ONTOLOGY OF SUTRAS

1. Leon Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (The Lotus Sutra)*, *Translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva*, 332; T 9.262.61a15–16. I refer to sutras by their shortest common name in English (e.g., the *Lotus Sutra*). Notes provide references to the *Taishō* canon, giving accession number, page, register, and lines. Thus T 9.262.61a15–16 refers to the fifteenth and sixteenth lines of the first

who have not heard it will be able to hear it" (Cleary, *The Flower Ornament Scripture*, 413, with minor changes; T 10.279.92a15-16).

98. T 12.374.370a18, 25. For an alternate translation, see Yamamoto, *The Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāna Sutra*, 22.

99. Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom*, 202 and 291; T 12.262.36a7-10, 52c11-12.

100. *A Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution* 2:31 and *Tales from Times Now Past* 12:2 tell of a young girl born with a club fist. When she finally opens it at age seven, she is found to have been clenching a relic in answer to her parents' long-forgotten vow to build a pagoda around just such an object. *A Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution* 3:18 and *Tales from Times Now Past* 14:26 relate the fate of a scripture copyist who has sex with a female pilgrim in the sutra hall and dies immediately afterward. *Uji Shūi Monogatari (A Gleaning of Tales from Uji)* 6 concerns a *hijiri* who claims to have "cut off the root of desire" (his penis). On closer inspection he is found to have merely bound it tightly and, when it is released, it rises in a towering erection "tap tapping against his belly" (NKBT 27: 62). *A Wondrous Record of Immediate Karmic Retribution* 3:19, *The Three Jewels* 2:4, and *Miracles of the Lotus Sutra* 98 concern the "Lump Nun" of Higo Province, who was born with a miraculous ability to memorize sutras, a skill that at least partially offsets her equally miraculous lack of a vagina.

2. LOCATING SETSUWA IN PERFORMANCE

1. Satō Akio, *Hyakuza hōdan kiki-gakishō*, 136.

2. For a general discussion of the popularity of Buddhist religious services in the medieval period, see Konishi Jin'ichi, *A History of Japanese Literature*, vol. 3, *The High Middle Ages*, 117-36 and 314-49. Gomi Fumihiko, Gorai Shigeru, Hirota Tetsumichi, Komine Kazuaki, Ikegami Jun'ichi, and Murogi Mitarō variously explore the "place" (Jp: *ba*) of sermonizing in medieval Japan as an epistemological concept, as an architectural locale, as a performance, and as an effect of orality. Margaret Childs examines the overlap between sensuality and sermon rhetoric in her "Kyōgen Kigo: Love Stories as Buddhist Sermons."

3. As one indication, journals publishing setsuwa scholarship include *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* (National literature: interpretation and appreciation), *Kokugo kokubun* (National language, national literature), and *Kokubungaku tōsa* (National literature survey). The modern academic tendency to see literature in terms of the development of cultural and national distinctiveness is a product of the intersection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Japanese nativist (Jp: *koku-gaku*) philosophy and the creation of a modern academic system in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See Peter Nosco, H. D. Harootunian, and Yoda Tomiko.

4. Joel Tatelman, *The Glorious Deeds of Pūrna: A Translation and Study of the Pūrnavādāna*, 33.

5. John Strong, *The Legend of King Asoka*, 22.

6. Tatelman, *The Glorious Deeds of Pūrna*, 8. For an analysis of the underlying structure and philosophy of *jātaka*, see Hikata Ryūshō.

7. On the cosmological aspects of *zhi guai*, see Robert Campany, *Strange Writing: Anomaly Accounts in Early Medieval China*.

8. I follow Donald Gjertson in seeing Chinese "anomaly accounts" (also translated "strange tales") as an important mediating genre between Indian "karmic biographies" and Japanese "explanatory tales." See also Itō Chikako, and Yoshiko Dykstra, "The Japanese *Setsuwa* and the Indian *Avadāna*."

9. As far as I am aware, there is no comprehensive overview of setsuwa in any Western language. Konishi Jin'ichi's discussion of setsuwa vis-à-vis the classical genres of *waka* (Japanese poetry) and *monogatari* (prosimetric narratives, that is, prose narratives organized around poetic interludes) is perhaps the best survey and may be found in *A History of Japanese Literature*, vol. 2, *The Early Middle Ages*. For topical treatments, see Lorinda Kiyama; Thomas Howell, Jr.; R. Keller Kimbrough, *Preachers, Poets, Women, and the Way: Izumi Shikibu and the Buddhist Literature of Medieval Japan*, 28-51; and Michelle Li, *Ambiguous Bodies: Reading the Grotesque in Japanese Setsuwa Tales*, 14-51. In Japanese, see the works of Komine Kazuaki, Kojima Takayuki, Iwamoto Yutaka, Masuda Katsumi, Uematsu Shigeru, Honda Giken, and Nishio Kōichi. *Setsuwa no gensetsu*, edited by Honda et al., is an excellent critical introduction to setsuwa, its mediate location between oral and written traditions, and its relations to other medieval genres.

10. Kojima Takayuki, "Kankyō no Tomo Kaisetsu," SNKBT 40: 543.

11. Heijōkyō (modern-day Nara) was the capital of Japan from 710 until 784. The capital was moved, perhaps in part to weaken the influence that the powerful monasteries had on imperial politics. For more on Kyōkai, see Fukushima Kōichi; Hashikawa Tadashi; Takase Shōgon, *Nihon genpō zen'aku ryōiki*, 19-23; and Kyoko Motomichi-Nakamura, *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition: The Nihon Ryōiki of the Monk Kyōkai*, 3-14.

12. Motomichi-Nakamura also provides a complete translation of the collection into English, and Gjertson gives a translation of the *Ming Pao Chi*. Kyōkai was also familiar with the *Panjo Yenji*, compiled by Meng Hsien-chung in 718. See also Konishi Jin'ichi, *A History of Japanese Literature*, vol. 1, *The Archaic and Ancient Ages*, 425-27. On the textual history of the *Nihon Genpō Zen'aku Ryōiki*, see Amemiya Shōji, Itabashi Tomoyuki, Koizumi Michi, and Ikeda Kikan. For Chinese sources, see Tokushi Yūshō, Yagi Tsuyoshi, and Donald Gjertson.

13. The restrictions were defied by a handful of wandering monks and nuns, the earliest of whom was Gyōki (668-749). Nemoto Seiji's *Nara jidai no sōryō to shakai* provides an excellent history of the tradition of self-ordained monks and nuns (Jp: *shidosō*), who at times were beaten with canes, stripped of their robes, and exiled for their attentions to the physical and spiritual needs of the lower social classes. Following the eighth century, the state lost the battle to restrain self-

ordained monks and nuns, and restrictions gradually loosened. Ryūichi Abe discusses the impact that the state regulations had on “severely limit[ing] direct contact between the ordained and the masses” (79) in *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse*, 76–83.

14. For more on Minamoto no Tamenori see Okada Mareo. For textual history, including sources and structure, see Mizuta Norihisa, Yasuda Naomichi, Mori Masato, Kasuga Kazuo, Izumoji Osamu, and Nakagawa Chūjin.

15. The idea of creating a setsuwa collection for the purpose of introducing an upper-class and recently tonsured woman to the Buddhist path seems to have been a relatively common one. The *Kohon setsuwashū* (*A Collection of Setsuwa from Old Books*, probably created by 1180, but unknown outside the family until 1949) and *A Companion in Solitude* (1222), of which more below, also perform this function. For a lengthier introduction to *The Three Jewels*, including its manuscripts and its historical context, see Edward Kamens’s *The Three Jewels: A Study and Translation of Minamoto Tamenori’s Sanbōe*. Kamens also provides a translation of the collection into English.

16. For more on the textual history, authorship, and historical context of *Miracles of the Lotus Sutra*, see Akashi Mitsumaro, Kagamishima Hiroyuki, Kurobe Michiyoshi, Uematsu Shigeru, and Yamane Kenkichi.

17. For a lengthier introduction to and a full translation of *Miracles of the Lotus Sutra*, see Yoshiko Dykstra, *Miraculous Tales of the Lotus Sutra from Ancient Japan: The Dainihonkoku Hokekyō Kenki of Priest Chingen*.

18. Other extant twelfth-century setsuwa collections include *Gōdanshō* (*Notes of Conversations with Ōe no Masafusa*, 1111, which includes one section on Buddhism), *Konjaku Monogatari* (*Tales from Times Now Past*, by 1120?), *Uchigikishū* (*A Collection Written While Listening*, ca. 1111–34, author unknown), the *Kohon Setsuwashū* (*A Collection of Setsuwa from Old Books*, by 1180?), the *Hōbutushū* (*A Collection of Treasures*, ca. 1180?), the *Senjūshō* (*Collected Notes on Selected Tales*, ca. 1183–99?, author unknown), and the *Uji Shūi Monogatari* (*A Gleaning of Tales from Uji*, 1190–1242, author unknown). Future archival research may well reveal more texts from this general time period.

19. “Za” indicates a single “seated” session. Although extended sermonizing events like this one often featured two daily sessions, internal evidence from the collection indicates there was only one daily gathering.

20. Because of its fairly recent rediscovery, scholarship on *One Hundred Sessions of Sermons* is not as plentiful as it is for other collections. Yamagishi and Satō’s studies are foundational. See Mori Masato and Kikuya Ryōichi for more on the oral and performance contexts of the *Hyakuza* sermonizing event.

21. Marian Ury, *Tales of Times Now Past: Sixty-Two Stories from a Medieval Japanese Collection*, 1. W. Michael Kelsey theorizes that the internal organization of each volume follows conventions of poetic linking in his “*Konjaku Monogatari*shū: Toward an Understanding of Its Literary Qualities.”

22. For more on the textual history, sources, and authorship of *Tales from Times Now Past*, see Matsuo Hiroshi, Andō Naotarō, Yamane Kenkichi, Robert Brower, Ikegami Jun’ichi, Komine Kazuaki, and Katayose Masayoshi.

23. See his discussion of the collection in SNKBT 40: 516–18.

24. See Koizumi Hiroshi, *Hōbutushū: chūsei koshabon sanshu* and *Koshōhon Hōbutushū*, reprised by Yamada Shōzen in SNKBT 40: 530–35. For further information on the authorship and textual history of this collection, see Tachibana Sumitaka, Chiba Shōgen, Uryū Tōshō, and Atsumi Kaoru.

25. On *A Collection of Spiritual Awakenings*, see the scholarly survey by Hayashi Masahiko et al. For more on Kamo no Chōmei and his authorial activities, see Yamada Shōzen and Furuhashi Tsuneo, “*Hosshinshū* shiron: Kamo no Chōmei bannen no chosaku to shinkyō.” Takao Minoru, Iwata Taijō, Kifuji Saizō, and Morishita Yōji provide discussions of the text’s structure and its changes over time. For information on cultural and historical contexts, including the relation between the collection and public preaching, see Takao Minoru; Imamura Mieko; and Furuhashi Tsuneo, “Kamo no Chōmei, *Hosshinshū* ni okeru ‘hosshin’ to ‘ōjō.’”

26. For further discussion of the authorship, historical context, and textual history of *A Companion in Solitude*, see Hashimoto Shinkichi, Nagai Yoshinori, Kobayashi Yasuharu, Hirabayashi Moritoku, and Harada Kōzō.

27. According to tradition, women are faced with five obstructions that are inherent to their gender. The five obstructions, or “five obstacles” (Jp: *goshō*), have to do with the impossibility of achieving rebirth directly from a female form into any of five higher physical forms, including that of a buddha. Technically speaking, a woman must first experience the human, male form before she can gain entry to any of these five, higher paths.

28. For an English translation of the former and a summary of the latter, see Robert Morrell, *Sand and Pebbles (Shasekishū): The Tales of Mujū Ichten, A Voice for Pluralism in Kamakura Buddhism*, 146–47 and 188.

29. Konishi Jin’ichi, *A History of Japanese Literature*, vol. 3, 316. See also Sekiyama Kazuo, *Sekkyō no rekishi: bukkyō to wagei*.

30. See Morrell, *Sand and Pebbles (Shasekishū)*, 42–44.

31. For a more in-depth discussion of the cultural context, textual history, and authorship of *A Collection of Sand and Pebbles*, see Andō Naotarō, *Setsuwa to haikai no kenkyū*, 131–209; Kobayashi Tadao; Kumahara Masao; Robert Morrell; Sakurai Yoshirō; and Watanabe Tsuyana.

32. Komatsu Kazuhiko, “Setsuwa no keisei to henshen,” 34.

33. Komine Kazuaki, *Setsuwa no mori: chūsei no tengu kara Isoppu made*, 309.

34. Komine Kazuaki, “Setsuwa no ronri: hanashi no shōjin to isō,” 40.

35. Komatsu Kazuhiko, “Setsuwa no keisei to henshen,” 30; Satō Akira, “Enzuru shutai: *Uji shūi monogatari* no hyōgen kikō,” 46.

36. Komine Kazuaki, *Chūsei setsuwa no sekai wo yomu*, 38.

37. See chapters 46 and 47, “Beneath the Oak” and “Trefoil Knots,” for the full

narrative. Edward Seidensticker, *The Tale of Genji*, 799–871. Komine also employs the sexual conquest metaphor in his *Setzuwa no mori*, 146 and 310.

38. Paul Zumthor, *Speaking of the Middle Ages*, 22.

39. *Ibid.*, 41–44.

40. *Ibid.*, 81.

41. Sarah Kay, “Analytical Survey 3: The New Philology,” 304.

42. The idea of ruminating on a religious text or incantation is also a recurrent image in medieval Christian writings. Scholar and Benedictine priest Jean Leclercq has written of the link between “aural memory” and the “mastication of divine words” in medieval Christian practice. Similarly, he has described the “deep impregnation with the words of Scripture” in which such rumination results (*The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, esp. 72–75). Some contemporary Japanese efforts to increase sutra-reading activity among the laity have likewise seized on the metaphor of reading as chewing, as in Kamada Shōken’s *Okyō wo tabeyō (1): Dokyō wa shisha no tame dewanai* (On eating sutras: reading the sutras isn’t for the deceased).

43. Vimalakīrti services were often held at temples that took as their chief devotional object an image of the Yakushi buddha, the buddha of medicine. See Matsuno Junji, *Bukkyō gyōji to sono shisō*.

44. Leon Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (The Lotus Sutra)*, Translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva, 101.

45. SNKBT 3: 106, poem 2789.

46. NKBZ 52:20. Mujū repeats this figuration of his text as a marital go-between in his concluding remarks (615).

47. See the sermons from the third and eighth days of the Third Month (Satō, *Hyakuza hōdan kiki-gakishō*, 94 and 102).

48. SNKS 133–36. To conclude the story, the huntsman-novice goes to a nearby mountain temple and, from there, to a west-facing cliff by the edge of the sea. Refusing any food, he shouts a greeting to Amida and then sits to wait for his answer. When a group of monks goes to check on him some days later, they find him still seated there, a blue lotus flower growing from the corpse’s tongue. For other versions of this story, see *Tales from Times Now Past* 19: 14 and the final volume of *A Collection of Treasures*, 343–45.

49. It was customary at the time to give leftover food offerings to beggars after the service’s completion.

50. All of the setsuwa in section 6 of *A Collection of Sand and Pebbles* treat the topic of preaching (NKBZ 52: 313–50). For more on the use of setsuwa in medieval preaching, see Kawaguchi Hisao.

51. As described by Gokoji Tsutomu, drawing on material from the courtier diaries *Gyokuyōki* and *Meigetsuki*, in his “Setsuwa bungaku ni arawareta Agui-ryū: Chōken to Seikaku wo chūshin ni,” 136. For more on the Agui school, see Shimizu

Yūshō and Lorinda Kiyama, as well as Nagai Yoshinori and Kiyomizu Yūsei’s edited volume *Agui shōdōshū*.

52. From this point on I will summarize the less formal version of events, which is what Shinjō does, providing occasional comments about which sections of the liturgy may be entrusted to other celebrants, if present.

53. *Hōsokushū*, 495.

54. *Ibid.*, 497.

3. DECOMPOSING BODIES, COMPOSING TEXTS

1. Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories*, 11–12.

2. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the Politics of Performance*, 148.

3. Caroline Walker Bynum makes a similar argument regarding medieval Christianity in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*: “The twelfth and thirteenth centuries in western Europe saw renewed debate over dozens of theological matters . . . in which the relationship of part to whole is crucial, and a new emphasis on miracles . . . in which bodies are the mediators between earth and heaven. It was a period in which the overcoming of partition and putrefaction—either through reunion of parts into a whole or through assertion of part as part to be the whole—was the image of paradise” (13).

4. For *kyōgen kigo*, see Nagai Giken, “Kyōgen kigo ni tsuite”; Margaret Childs, “Kyōgen Kigo: Love Stories as Buddhist Sermons”; Michele Marra, *The Aesthetics of Discontent: Politics and Reclusion in Medieval Japanese Literature*; and William LaFleur, *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan*. For *waka soku darani*, see Yamada Shōzen, “Waka soku darani kan no tenkai”; and R. Keller Kimbrough, “Reading the Miraculous Power of Japanese Poetry: Spells, Truth Acts, and a Medieval Buddhist Poetics of the Supernatural.” For *sokushin jōbutsu*, see Yoshito Hakeda, *Kūkai: Major Works, Translated, With an Account of His Life and a Study of His Thought*; and Abe Ryūichi *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse*. For *hongaku shisō*, see Jacqueline Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Buddhism*.

5. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked*, 148.

6. The metaphor appears, for instance, in the *Lotus Sutra* (T 9.262.60b1) and the *Nirvana Sutra* (T 12.374.498c26).

7. Michele Marra, “The Development of Mappō Thought in Japan, Parts I & II,” 39.

8. As in the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, T 14.475.539b14.

9. *Discourses on the Greater Wisdom Sutra* (Sk: *Mahāprajñāpāramitā śāstra*; Jp: *Daichidoron*)—translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva in 402–5 and attributed to Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250?)—and the Chinese Tendai patriarch Zhiyi’s (538–97)