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Author(s): Robert E. Morrell

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Mirror for Women

Mujū Ichien's *Tsuma Kagami*

by ROBERT E. MORRELL

BY 1300 Heian Japan was a splendid memory. Its courtly values pervaded the world of nostalgia with a force that they had perhaps never known in the world of everyday affairs. But Kamakura was a new way of doing things—in language, political administration, social relationships, and religion. It was a way of doing things in which we can discern the origins of modern Japan.

In 1300 Mujū Ichien composed his *Tsuma Kagami*,¹ 'Mirror for Women', a popular religious tract (*kana hōgo*)² reflecting Buddhist values of a society in transition. While it supported the Pure Land and Zen practices that had blossomed during the previous century, it did not neglect the earlier expressions of Japanese Buddhism, especially Tendai and Shingon. In fact, its very eclecticism was a throwback to an earlier age when the principle of accommodation encouraged Buddhists to see the varieties of religious experience as all more or less adequate rationalizations of the same spiritual truth. Some ways of viewing experience might lead a person to enlightenment more quickly than others, but each had its proper place in the hierarchy of spiritual methods. Then the reformers of the Kamakura period—Hōnen, Shinran, Dōgen, Nichiren—discovered that an excess of accommodation could be spiritually debilitating. What was needed to revive the religious vigor of the new age was single-minded dedication to an exclusive ideal, an attitude which all too easily led to parochial fanaticism. But Mujū would have none of this. Both *Tsuma Kagami* and the work for which he is best known to us today, *Shasekishū*,³ 'Collection of Sand and Pebbles', insistently warn against doctrinal exclusiveness. Perhaps unrealistically Mujū wanted the best of both worlds: the peaceful eclecticism of Heian Buddhism as well as the vigor of the new movements.

THE AUTHOR is Associate Professor of Japanese Language and Literature at Washington University, St Louis.

¹ 無住一円, 1226–1312; 妻鏡.

² 仮名法語

³ 沙石集. The text to which I refer in this article, unless otherwise stated, is the *bonshun-bon* 梵舞本 published in Watanabe Tsunaya

渡辺綱也, ed., *Shasekishū* (NKBT 85), Iwanami Shoten, 1966. For additional translations, see my 'Mujū Ichien's Shinto-Buddhist Syncretism: *Shasekishū*, Book 1', in *MN* xxviii: 4 (Winter 1973), pp. 447–88, and 'Tales from the Collection of Sand and Pebbles', in *Literature East and West*, xiv:2 (1970), pp. 251–63.

What we know of Mujū's life is mainly from his own writings, especially *Zōtanshū*,⁴ 'Casual Digressions', of his late years, from a few secondary sources⁵ compiled much later which depend heavily on these writings, and from conjecture. Mujū was a Kajiwara, and his relationship to the infamous and ill-fated Kagetoki⁶ may have influenced his decision to enter religious life. He was studious in his youth, and by 1261, when he became a disciple of the Rinzaï Zen pioneer, Enni Bennen,⁷ he had become well versed in the doctrinal positions of his day. Two years later he went to live at Chōboji⁸ in what is now Nagoya, restoring it as a branch temple of Bennen's Tōfukuji in Kyoto. Except for trips to the Ise Shrine, Kyoto, Mt Kōya, and the nearby Rengeji⁹ in the Kuwana district, Mujū remained at Chōboji until his death in 1312 in his eighty-seventh year.

The role of women in the establishment of Chōboji may have had an indirect influence on Mujū's concern for women's salvation. The temple was originally established under Tendai auspices by Yamada Shigetada¹⁰ in 1179 as a memorial to his mother. Shigetada had sided with Emperor Go-Toba during the Shōkyū War and eventually committed suicide.¹¹ His brother, Akinaga,¹² was also involved in the unsuccessful uprising, but escaped beheading through divine intervention. It was Akinaga's son, the lay priest Dōen, and Dōen's wife, Sukeko,¹³ who became Mujū's disciples and supported his reconstruction of Chōboji following a fire after Mujū had taken up residence there.¹⁴ Sukeko's involvement

⁴ 雑談集. The 1644 woodblock printing of this work is the source of two modern editions: the annotated version in Yamada Shōzen 山田昭全 & Miki Sumito 三木紀人, ed., *Zōtanshū*, Miyai Shoten, 1973, and the facsimile edition, Matsuura Sadatoshi 松浦貞俊, ed., *Zōtanshū*, Koten Bunko, 1950, 2 volumes.

⁵ These are principally [*Kaizan Mujū Kokushi*] *Ryakuengi* [開山無住国師] 略縁起 ('Short Biography [of National Teacher Mujū, Founder of the Temple]'), compiled by Kenryō 乾嶺 in 1707, and [*Mujū Kokushi*] *Dōshakukō* [無住国師] 道跡考 ('Religious Traces [of National Teacher Mujū]'), compiled by Tainin 諦忍 in 1770. Both works appeared in woodblock editions. My references are to citations in Watanabe.

⁶ 梶原景時, who is reputed to have fostered Minamoto Yoritomo's suspicions against Yoshitsune. Kagetoki was killed in 1200.

⁷ 円爾辨円, 1202–80.

⁸ 長母寺. Mujū's temple exists today in Higashi-ku, Nagoya, overlooking the River Yada; it was rebuilt in 1682 and none of its structures dates from the Kamakura period.

⁹ 蓮華寺

¹⁰ 山田重忠 (or Shigesada 重定), d. 1221. Fukada Masaki 深田正韶, ed., *Owari Shi* 尾張志, Rekishi Toshosha, 1969, II, p. 143.

¹¹ Shigetada had a prominent role in Go-Toba's skirmish with the Kamakura military establishment. See William H. McCullough, 'Shōkyūki: An Account of the Shōkyū War of 1221', in *MN* xix:1–2 (1964), p. 189, and 3–4, pp. 427–8, 435–7, & 448–9. His son Shigetsugu 重継 also died in the conflict.

¹² 明長, 1181–1266. The dating follows *Moriyamashi-shi* 守山市史, Aichi-ken Moriyamashi Yakusho, Moriyama, 1963, which includes considerable information about the Yamada family at this time, pp. 554 ff.

Shasekishū 2:4 (NKBT 85, pp. 96–8) relates how Akinaga was saved by the intercession of Yakushi Buddha, to whom he had a special devotion. The incident had been told to Mujū by 'the lay-priest who had been his adopted son'. The lay-priest could not have been Dōen (see below, n. 14), that is, Shigetsugu, who died in the Shōkyū War.

¹³ 道円, 資子

¹⁴ The claim that 'Akinaga's son, the Echigo lay-priest Dōen, and his wife became Mujū's disciples' is found in *Ryakuengi*, as quoted in Watanabe, p. 40. While it is impossible to reconcile this statement with other records and dates, Sukeko evidently had a close connection with Chōboji. *Moriyamashi-shi*, p. 563, states that 'Dōen' was Shigetsugu's *azana*, or



Chūnichi Shimbun

Statue of Mujū Ichien in Chōboji

with Chōboji may be seen from her having taken the temple's name as her own. It is not unlikely that Shigetada's mother and Sukeko, both of whom were prominent in the fortunes of Chōboji, and thus of Mujū himself, were in his thoughts when he composed *Tsuma Kagami*. In 1300 Mujū was in his seventy-fifth year and given to the nostalgia and reminiscence of old age, traits seen conspicuously in *Zōtanshū* a few years later. Perhaps Mujū wrote *Tsuma Kagami* with some sense of paying back old debts.

Nowhere does Mujū describe the circumstances of the composition of *Tsuma Kagami*, but in the concluding paragraph he does give an explanation of its title: '... should a woman make these precepts her constant companion [as she would a mirror], she will show herself to be a person of sensibility, a follower of the Way. And so I give this work the title, *Mirror for Women*.' But why should he use the character 妻 *tsuma* (literally, 'wife') in the title rather than, say, 女 *onna* ('woman')? To the extent that the tract is directed to women at all, it is not directed to them in their role as wives. Given Mujū's penchant for wordplay, it is possible that '*Tsuma Kagami*' may have been suggested by the title of the famous chronicle of the Kamakura military establishment, *Azuma Kagami* 吾妻鏡,¹⁵ 'Mirror of the East', whose text was largely completed by 1270 and may well have been known to Mujū. The characters for *azuma* (*a-tsuma*, literally, 'my wife') may be used as rebus symbols, or *ateji*,¹⁶ for the word pronounced *azuma*, meaning 'east'—thus, *Azuma Kagami*, 'Mirror of the East'. By simply omitting the first character, we have the title of Mujū's discourse.

Another feature of *Tsuma Kagami* is that Mujū is more than halfway through the work before he first addresses the question of right behavior as it specifically applies to women. It is as if he were continuing *Shōzaishū*,¹⁷ 'Collection of Sacred Assets', a doctrinal work that he had drafted in the previous year, 1299, and belatedly decided to give his new composition a particular emphasis. The main theme of *Tsuma Kagami* is that life for all human beings is transient, and that we should strive diligently for our salvation. In the course of the tract Mujū quotes Tao-hsüan,¹⁸ patriarch of the Chinese Disciplinary Sect, on 'the seven grave vices of women', following this with several anecdotes about women before returning to themes of general religious practice. There may be 'many serious instances of the sins of women', but 'there is no time to discuss them in detail.'¹⁹

adopted name. His wife Sukeko is said to have died in 1249, fourteen years before Mujū came to Chōboji. But the fact that she was known as Chōboin indicates some link with the temple, and it is at least suggestive that her religious name was Junkyō 純鏡, 'Pure Mirror'.

¹⁵ Shigetada and Shigetatsu are also mentioned in this work, although less prominently than in *Shōkyūki*. See William McCullough, 'The *Azuma kagami* account of the Shōkyū

War', in *MN* xxiii:1–2 (1968), pp. 118, 120, 125, & 127. For a general account of *Azuma Kagami*, see Minoru Shinoda, *The Founding of the Kamakura Shogunate, 1180–1185*, Columbia U.P., 1960.

¹⁶ 当て字

¹⁷ 聖財集. A modern edition, Unkyō Chidō 雲嶠智道, ed., *Shōzaishū*, Issaikyō Imbō, Kyoto, 1893, also includes *Tsuma Kagami*.

¹⁸ 道宣. See n. 78, below.

¹⁹ See below, p. 67.

Quite apart from Mujū's personal choice of topics to discuss or to ignore is the fact that Buddhist ethics are basically asexual and, indeed, are not even confined to human kind. Specific rules inevitably reflect the biases of the societies to which the ideal is adapted, an ideal of enlightenment for all sentient beings without regard to sex or even species. In male-dominated societies one would expect to see this adaptation reflect anti-feminist attitudes, but we must be careful to distinguish the essential from the peripheral. While social relationships are the basis of Confucian ethics, they are of little interest, and indeed often a hindrance, to one whose goal is liberation from conceptual, including social, restraints. As Mujū remarks in *Tsuma Kagami*, 'It is characteristic of death that it varies for neither warrior nor slave.'²⁰ Instead of telling women to obey their husbands—see, for example, the notorious *Onna Daigaku*, 'Greater Learning for Women', ascribed to Kaibara Ekiken²¹—Mujū tells them to avoid envy. But this admonition applies equally to all creatures. The basic fault is attachment that hinders us from realizing enlightenment, and sensuality, envy, and delusion are only so many facets of it. The social implications of behavior are not Mujū's concern.

Tsuma Kagami is similar in style to *Shasekishū* in its doctrinal diversity, in the rather terse treatment of the anecdotes which illustrate a moral, and even in an occasional flash of the humor for which Mujū is noted. But on the whole *Tsuma Kagami* is a staid piece of writing by a man in his mid-seventies residing at a small country temple where he found it increasingly difficult to get along with his disciples and friends. Nevertheless, when we recall the humorous incidents recorded in *Shasekishū*, we are not surprised to find in *Tsuma Kagami* the story of Ciñcā, who feigned pregnancy by hanging a bowl under her dress, or Yajñadattā, who thought that she had lost her head, or of the venal priest who turned into a cow.

Mujū's fairly extensive literary production permits us to explore in some depth the mental furnishings of an intelligent, pedantic cleric of average social position and with a saving sense of humor. His ideas are a mixture of old and new, as were the times in which he lived. The emphases, the repetition of certain themes, the choice of examples and scriptural citations, all contribute to a coherent intellectual portrait of a man who was in touch with popular Buddhism on the ground level, while at the same time being unusually knowledgeable about the various sectarian positions of his age. Even what he does not bother to mention as late as 1300—Shinran, Dōgen, Nichiren, the Mongol Invasions of 1274 and 1281, etc.—might cause us to wonder how much of the subsequent reconstruction of history would be recognized by those who directly experienced it. To know history may be to understand general principles which can explain the occurrences of a period. But there is also a kind of understanding through immersing oneself directly into the thoughts and feelings of the people living that history, trivialities and all.

²⁰ See below, pp. 62–63.

²¹ 女大学; 貝原益軒, 1630–1714.

Tsuma Kagami adds another perspective to our understanding of medieval Japan's view of women and of popular Kamakura Buddhism as it was lived. The better-known literature of the military class and of the court provides us with other insights, but for a well-rounded picture we must look to the neglected genres of *setsuwa* and *kana hōgo*. Here we can occasionally catch a glimpse of everyday Japan, a world apart from the Japan of court intrigues, military prowess, and refined sensibilities.

In addition to several pre-Meiji versions of *Tsuma Kagami*, there are as many as seven modern printings of the work. The text used for the present translation is the annotated edition included in Miyasaka Yūshō, ed., *Kana Hōgoshū*.²² This is based for the most part on the copy of the 1641 woodblock edition owned by Kōyasan University library.

²² 宮坂宥勝, ed., 假名法語集 (NKBT 83), Iwanami Shoten, 1964, pp. 158–94.