

Visual and Material Culture at Hōkyōji Imperial Convent:
The Significance of “Women’s Art” in Early Modern Japan

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation focuses on the visual and material culture of Hōkyōji Imperial Buddhist Convent (*Hōkyōji ama monzeki jūin*) during the Edo period (1600-1868). Situated in Kyoto and in operation since the mid-fourteenth century, Hōkyōji has been the home for women from the highest echelons of society—the nobility and military aristocracy—since its foundation. The objects associated with women in the rarefied position of princess-nun offer an invaluable look into the role of visual and material culture in the lives of elite women in early modern Japan. Art associated with nuns reflects aristocratic upbringing, religious devotion, and individual expression. As such, it defies easy classification: court, convent, sacred, secular, elite, and female are shown to be inadequate labels to identify art associated with women. This study examines visual and material culture through the intersecting factors that inspired, affected, and defined the lives of princess-nuns, broadening the understanding of the significance of art associated with women in Japanese art history.

Specific examples of visual and material culture are studied in four chapters that challenge existing conceptions and elucidate women’s art in Japan during the early modern period. Chapter One explores the historical circumstances of the convent’s origins and the social, political, and religious place of Hōkyōji in the visual culture of the early modern period. Chapter Two focuses on the painting program of Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons in the two most public rooms of Hōkyōji’s reception hall. The paintings are examined with consideration of the extent to which gender played a role in the decoration of the convent and how the choice of decorative theme may have impacted women in the convent. Chapter Three focuses on

objects created by Tokugon Rihō (later known as Hongakuin no miya), the twenty-second abbess of Hōkyōji, highlighting the religious and imperial education that informs her art. The final chapter addresses the cultural significance both within and without the convent of a *Tale of Genji*-themed painted incense album by Hongakuin no miya. The album reflects personal interest, education, and the anticipation of a late Edo *Genji* boom in art and literature in urban centers and epitomizes cultural currents in imperial Buddhist convents and Kyoto society during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The trajectory the object takes from personal object of use to cultural marker is traced and discussed in this chapter.

Through close study of objects associated with Hōkyōji nuns, it becomes possible to see how visual and material culture reflects, changes, and fulfills the lives of a segment of Japanese society for which our knowledge to date has been fragmented and incomplete. The larger goal of this dissertation is to contribute to an ongoing effort within the discipline to redefine and expand the borders of Japanese art history.

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- 4.39 Incense karuta set: *Evening Mist chapter*. Edo period. 5 x 7 cm. Light color on paper. Kyoto City University of Art, Kyoto

- 4.40 Incense karuta set: *The Safflower* chapter. Edo period. 5 x 7 cm. Light color on paper. Kyoto City University of Art, Kyoto
- 4.41 Incense karuta set: *Beneath the Autumn Leaves* chapter. Edo period. 5 x 7 cm. Light color on paper. Kyoto City University of Art, Kyoto
- 4.42 Utagawa Kunisada I (Toyokuni III). *The Paulownia Pavilion*, from the series Genji Incense Pictures (Genji kō no zu). 1843. 25.7 x 18.6 cm. Woodblock print, ink and color on paper. Publisher: Yamamotoya Heikichi. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
- 4.43 Utagawa Kunisada I (Toyokuni III). *The Bridge of Floating Dreams*, from the series Genji Incense Pictures (Genji kō no zu). 1843. 25.7 x 18.6 cm. Woodblock print, ink and color on paper. Publisher: Yamamotoya Heikichi. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
- 4.44 Tosa Mitsuyoshi and Tosa School. Genji monogatari album: *The Typhoon*. Folded album, 27.5 x 22.7 cm. colors on silk. Kyoto National Museum
- 4.45 Hongakuin no miya. Genji Incense album: *The Typhoon*. Late seventeenth, early eighteenth century. 13 x 15 cm. Color on silk. Hōkyōji Imperial Buddhist Convent, Kyoto
- 4.46 Hongakuin no miya. Genji Incense album: *Under the Cherry Blossoms*. Late seventeenth, early eighteenth century. 13 x 15 cm. Color on silk. Hōkyōji Imperial Buddhist Convent, Kyoto
- 4.47 Tosa Mitsuyoshi and Tosa School. Genji monogatari album: *Under the Cherry Blossoms*. Folded album, 27.5 x 22.7 cm. colors on silk. Kyoto National Museum
- 4.48 *Tokiwa no matsu*, *Tale of Genji* leaf, detail. 1704. Printed book, ink on paper. Mitsui Bunkō, University of California, Berkeley
- 4.49 *Tokiwa no matsu*, detail. 1704. Printed book, ink on paper. Mitsui Bunkō, University of California, Berkeley
- 4.50 Shimokobe Shūsui. *Onna teikin gosho bunko*, *Tale of Genji* leaf, detail. 1790. Printed book, ink on paper. Mitsui Bunkō, University of California, Berkeley

Introduction

Hōkyōji Imperial Buddhist Convent (*Hōkyōji ama monzeki jiin* 宝鏡寺尼門跡寺院) stands today on a small residential street in Kyoto much like it has for the past two hundred years, when it was rebuilt after being destroyed in the Tenmei Fire of 1788. An imposing wooden gate, stone post with engraved convent name, and wooden sign with information about the history of the convent written in both Japanese and English indicate the presence of the convent behind a tall wall. (Fig. 0.1) The plaque and the closed gate suggest the buildings are important, that there is something worth hiding from view. Without prior knowledge of the convent, however, it is easy to walk past it without taking much notice of it.

Long functioning as a residence and religious institution run by and for women from the aristocracy and military elite, Hōkyōji continues to exist today as a functioning convent. While it has always been a private institution, reserved until the Meiji Restoration in 1868 for the daughters or sisters of the the Ashikaga family or the imperial family, it is now at its most accessible, with its doors open to the public at certain times of the year, the contents of its archives examined and discussed by historians, and its material culture included in international exhibitions. The recent accessibility of the convent has brought it (and other imperial Buddhist convents in Kyoto and Nara) a surge of attention that has helped bring deserved recognition to Hōkyōji while also (re)shaping its history.

My aim in writing about the visual and material culture at Hōkyōji is not to give a complete survey of the many objects remaining in its storehouse and painted on its walls or to fully explicate the architecture of its ritual and residential spaces. It is, rather, to highlight the diverse roles objects played in the lives of the women who lived there. By examining the social values to be found in the daily-use objects and devotional paintings, sliding door painting programs and hanging scrolls, a picture emerges of a world of art and culture in which women were not passive recipients but active participants and disseminators. It becomes possible to see how visual and material culture reflects, changes, and fulfills the lives of a segment of Japanese society for which our knowledge to date has been fragmented and incomplete. By necessity, this study is limited to the relatively few nuns who led Hōkyōji, the abbesses of the aristocracy, imperial family, or the military elite. Although a wide range of people – male and female – from all social classes lived and worked at the convent, the majority of material culture objects remaining at the convent was associated with the leaders of

the convent.¹ Moreover, this study of Hōkyōji revolves mainly around the objects and nuns of the early modern period (approximately 1600-1868), the time when the imperial Buddhist convent system was codified and Hōkyōji flourished. Overall, through this project, I join a growing number of scholars interested in advancing the understanding of women's involvement in various aspects of society, adding new voices to the heretofore muted past.

The active participation of women in Japanese culture is taken as a given here. The illumination of this participation thus becomes the focus of study. Through individual objects the role of visual and material culture in elite women's lives will be elucidated. Choosing objects that reside at a *bikuni gosho* 比丘尼御所 — as the word implies, a “palace for nuns” — may neatly, if somewhat facilely, intersect two groups of understudied society: aristocratic women and religious women of the early modern period. Entering the rarefied world of aristocrats and imperial princesses who became nuns (*ama monzeki* 尼門跡), the borders of this study, therefore, already require redefinition: convent, palace, sacredness, secularity, class, and gender are shown to be inadequate classifications in and of themselves. This inquiry exposes the permeability of these labels and will suggest reconfigurations of material and visual culture associated with women.

While my project purports to be about “women's art,” the term is also not singularly defined; rather, I hope to reveal how the topic encompasses sociopolitical and religious culture. However, although “women's art” is complicated and unpacked here, gender is the common underlying theme. The filter of gender exposes and validates the longstanding marginalized visual and material culture at the convent, giving shape to a largely overlooked field of materials that will help change the understanding of Japanese art. And so a balance is made between focusing on a collection of objects exclusively used by women and showing how this art reaches beyond the convent walls and impacts early modern Japanese society. Women's artistic roles will not be marginalized, nor brought into the “mainstream” of current art historical discourse. Rather, I aim to show that the very concept of mainstream Japanese art — and its margins — in the early modern period needs to be changed.

¹ Oka Yoshiko examines the diversity of social classes and the residence of men at imperial Buddhist convents in “Kinsei bikuni gosho no sōshiki” [The organization of early modern nun-palaces], an essay which publishes research findings first presented at the “Beyond Buddhology Symposium” held at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA on November 11, 2008. In *Nihon no shūkyō to jendā ni kansuru kokusai sōgō kenkyū: Amadera chōsa no seika o kiso to shite* [International interdisciplinary research related to religion and gender in Japan: the results of convent investigations as a foundation] (Nishinomiya: Oka Yoshiko, 2009), 69-73.

This project continues the work of scholars who have established the significance and function of convents in pre- and early modern Japanese history over the last thirty years. Religious, cultural, and art historians have begun to recognize the wealth of information regarding the lives, cultural production, and lasting legacy of women found in the imperial convents, filling in important lacunae in the broader historical record. Japanese literature scholar Barbara Ruch, in her capacity as Director of the Institute of Medieval Japanese Studies at Columbia University, has been instrumental in raising awareness of the imperial Buddhist convents and organizing the preservation of their structures and archives. A comprehensive volume of essays regarding the monastic life of nuns, convents, Buddhist practice, and women and Buddhist scripture edited by Ruch and published in 2002 brings together research on women and Buddhism by scholars of cultural studies, history, religion, and literature.² Scholars of women and Buddhism, such as Nishiguchi Junko, Ushiyama Yoshiyuki, and Katsuura Noriko, focus on the participation of pre- and early modern women in Buddhist practice.³ Oka Yoshiko has been the foremost contributor to studies of the cultural history of women and the imperial Buddhist convents with her research of women during the medieval and early modern periods conducted mainly through convent documents.⁴ In art history,

² Barbara Ruch, ed., *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2002).

³ Representative works by Nishiguchi Junko include: *Onna no chikara: Kodai no josei to Bukkyō* [The power of women: women in ancient Japan and Buddhism] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1987), and the edited volumes, *Hotoke to onna* [The Buddha and women] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1997) and Nishiguchi and Ōsumi Kazuo, ed. *Shirīzu josei to Bukkyō* [Women and Buddhism series], 4 vols. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1989). Ushiyama Yoshiyuki's influential essay, "Chūsei no amadera to ama" [Convents and nuns in medieval Japan] in *Ama to amadera* [Nuns and convents], *Shirīzu josei to Bukkyō*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1989), 221-269, was translated into English and adapted by Anne Dutton as, "Buddhist Convents in Medieval Japan," in *Engendering Faith*, 131-164. Katsuura Noriko's representative works include: *Kodai, chūsei no josei to Bukkyō* [Women and Buddhism in ancient and medieval Japan] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2003) and essays in *Nihonshi no naka no josei to Bukkyō* [Women and Buddhism in Japanese history], co-edited with Yoshida Kazuhiko and Nishiguchi Junko (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1999). For more essays and books by these authors, see the bibliography.

⁴ See Oka Yoshiko, "Kinsei no bikuni gosho (jō): Hōkyōji o chūshin ni" [Nun-palaces in early modern Japan (part one): the case of Hōkyōji], *Bukkyō shigaku kenkyū* 42, no. 2 (March 2000): 30-59; Kinsei no bikuni gosho (ge): Hōkyōji o chūshin ni" [Nun-palaces in early modern Japan

Patricia Fister has brought to light the creative endeavors of individual nuns, most notably the abbesses Bunchi 文智 (1619-1697) and Gen'yō 元瑤 (1634-1727), both active in the seventeenth century. Her groundbreaking research on objects of art created by talented women for religious devotion, filial piety, and artistic enjoyment provides a solid foundation on which further study of the visual and material cultures related to women can be based.⁵ Fister is also an editor and co-author of a major exhibition catalog that sheds light not only on the artistic output of imperial Buddhist nuns but also provides useful background information about court and religious life at the convents.⁶

The academic interest in imperial Buddhist convents and the objects and texts uncovered by the researchers above is also reflected in the recent research of young scholars who address women in Buddhism through medieval and early modern imperial Buddhist convents. Lori Meeks' research focuses on the socio-cultural, economic, and ritual life at the Ritsu school convent, Hokkeji,⁷ while Gina Cogan's dissertation on the role of monastic precepts in the relationship of Buddhist women and the state takes an in-depth look at the daily rituals and monastic precepts taken by Bunchi, the founding abbess of Enshōji.⁸

In her recent study, *Faith and Power in Japanese Buddhist Art: 1600-2005*, art historian Patricia Graham writes about the marginalization of Buddhist art in the Edo period

(part two): the case of Hōkyōji], *Bukkyō shigaku kenkyū* 44, no. 2 (2002): 1-40; and *Nihon no shūkyō to jendā ni kansuru kokusai sōgō kenkyū* (Nishinomiya: Oka Yoshiko, 2009).

⁵ See, for example, Patricia Fister, "Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments: The Buddhist Nun Bunchi and Her Father, Emperor Gomizuno-o," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 27, no. 3/4 (2000): 213-38; "From Sacred Leaves to Sacred Images: The Buddhist Nun Gen'yō's Practice of Making and Distributing Miniature Kannon," in *Seinaru mono no katachi to ba* [Figures and places of the sacred], ed. Yoritomi Motohiro (Kyoto: Kokusai Nihon Bunka Kenkyū Sentā, 2003), 75-98; "Merōfu Kannon and Her Veneration in Zen and Imperial Circles in Seventeenth-Century Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 34, no. 2. (2007): 417-442; and the exhibition catalog, *Amamonzeki to nisō no bijutsu* [Art by Buddhist nuns] (New York: Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies, 2003).

⁶ Chūsei Nihon Kenkyūjo, ed., *Amamonzeki jūin no sekai: Mikotachi no shinkō to gosho bunka* [Amamonzeki, a hidden heritage: treasures of the Japanese imperial convents] (Tokyo: Sankei Shinbunsha, 2009).

⁷ Lori Meeks, *Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010).

⁸ Gina Cogan, "Precepts and Power: Enshōji, Buddhism and the State in Seventeenth-Century Japan" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2004).

(1600-1868).⁹ The neglect of religious art from the early modern period, she argues, is partly the result of the art canon created at the end of the nineteenth century, which privileged the ancient as authentic; partly a political decision on the part of the Meiji government to promote Shintō and denigrate Buddhism in the late nineteenth century; and partly a growing discontent of the excesses of Buddhist officials in general society during the late Edo period.¹⁰ This project joins Graham in validating Buddhist art of the early modern period and, more importantly, reevaluating the methodology and structure of the field of Japanese art history. As Graham writes, “Admitting the more recently produced Japanese Buddhist material into the canon of Japanese art challenges conventional notions of the parameters of Japanese art.”¹¹ As sites of women’s cultural production and religious devotion, Hōkyōji and other imperial Buddhist convents offer new avenues of research and discovery of material and visual culture.

⁹ Patricia Graham, *Faith and Power in Japanese Buddhist Art: 1600-2005* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Graham writes, “Dearth of study about these materials [from the Edo period] results from scholarly presumptions of the aesthetic superiority of early Japanese Buddhist cultural artifacts and concomitant asserted decline in the institutional power of the religion after the sixteenth century in Japan.” Graham, *Faith and Power*, 2. Such “decline” is reflected in many essays and studies by the prominent historian, Tsuji Zennosuke 辻善之助, on the subject of the degeneration of Buddhism in the late Edo period, which has come to be known as “Edo Bukkyō darakuron” [Theory of Buddhist decadence in the Edo period]. Tsuji asserted that the decadence of Buddhist priests – straying from their precepts to follow a more “secular” lifestyle – led to a systematic corruption of Buddhism in general in Japan. See, for example, Tsuji, *Nihon bukkō shi* [The history of Japanese Buddhism], especially vol. 10, *Edo jidai ge* [Late Edo period] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1944-1955); and idem, *Haibutsu kishaku* [The abolishment of Buddhism and the destruction of Sākyamuni] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1935). His writings on the subject were, in part, a rationalization of the anti-Buddhist thought that resulted in violence toward Buddhist entities during the early years of the Meiji period. On the historical use of the term, “*darakuron*,” see Tamamuro Fumio, *Edo bakufu no shūkyō tōsei* [Religious regulations by the Edo bakufu] (Tokyo: Hyōronsha, 1971); and Ōkuwa Hitoshi, *Jidan no shishō* [Ideas of temple parishioners] (Tokyo: Kyōikusha, 1979). For a summary of scholarship on Tsuji’s work, see Orion Klautau, “Against the Ghosts of Recent Past: Meiji Scholarship and the Discourse on Edo-Period Buddhist Decadence,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 35, no. 2 (2008): 263-303. For further explanation of the promotion of Shintō over Buddhism (*Shinbutsu bunri*) during the Meiji period, see this paper’s Introduction, f.n. 72.

¹¹ Graham, *Faith and Power*, 9.

Methodology: Material and Visual Culture

The methodology for the project borrows from a theoretical approach to art history that privileges the materials, social circumstances, and historical contexts of an object. To paraphrase art historian David Summers, art is shaped by a community, and by extension, the historical circumstances associated with that community.¹² Art is not “made” by the single artist, but is a (natural) result of forces, material, possibility, and situations that come together. Art reflects the community, the historical circumstances, and the agents that made the artwork possible. A material culture approach, which privileges objects over written texts, gives voice to things that may not be illuminated otherwise due to lack of textual records related to them. Through examination of connections between object and society that are physical and tangible (including, but not limited to, physical location, techniques of production, and the originating sources and materials), we might learn about the historical and social circumstances in which an object was made, the significance of the object at the time of creation, and who made or received it. In other words, the object can shed light on the culture that produced it. Art historian Jules Prown explains:

Material culture is [...] the manifestation of culture through material productions. And the study of material culture is the study of material to understand culture, to discover the beliefs – the values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions – of a particular community or society at a given time. The underlying premise is that human-made objects reflect, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of the individuals who commissioned, fabricated, purchased, or used them and, by extension, the beliefs of the larger society to which these individuals belonged.¹³

Objects are a vital link to the past because they are the “only historical occurrences that continue to exist in the present.”¹⁴ Examination of things, therefore, helps to shed light on what was considered valuable to a society at the time they were made, including the materials,

¹² David Summers, “Form and Gender,” in *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretation*, ed. Norman Bryson et al. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994), 384-412.

¹³ Jules Prown, “The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction?” in *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, ed. Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery (Washington, DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 1.

¹⁴ Jules Prown, “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (Spring, 1982): 3.

style, and utility.¹⁵ Another important aspect of objects, however, lies in their reception. Things are partly given their shape, their meaning, and their historical significance through being viewed, handled, and used. Objects are seen in a cultural context of production and reception as part of a “visual culture.”¹⁶

As a field of inquiry in itself, “visual culture” and the discipline of visual culture studies have been subject to numerous interpretations in recent years; yet, the meaning of media and visual arts mediated through the sense of sight remains constant.¹⁷ Largely a catch phrase for the overwhelming amount of visual technology present in modern society, from images captured on security cameras to film and photography, “visual culture” has become – as a discipline – a thoroughly modern phenomena.¹⁸ Underlying all visual culture studies, however,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Alpers makes a distinction between the study of the history of Dutch art and its visual culture, which includes situating a work of art into a “place, role, and presence in a broader context” in *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), xxiv. It is one of the earliest uses of the term. In the same introduction, she attributes the coining of the term to Michael Baxandall. Ibid., xxv.

¹⁷ Definitions of visual culture are numerous: Nicholas Mirzoeff’s opinion is that it is “concerned with visual events in which information, meaning or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology,” which he describes as “any form of apparatus designed either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision, from oil painting to television and the Internet” in *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 3. John Albert Walker and Sarah Chaplin define it as “those material artefacts, buildings and images, plus time-based media and performances, produced by human labor and imagination, which serve aesthetic, symbolic, ritualistic or ideological-political ends, and/or practical functions, and which address the sense of sight to a significant extent” in *Visual Culture: An Introduction* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press; New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 2. Matthew Rampley explains the breadth of visual materials in social aesthetics: “Not only does art consist of practices *other* than the making of images — one should mention sculpture and, more recently, installation or text-based conceptual art — but also material artefacts play a crucial part in the visual articulation of cultural values and identity. These range from fashion designs to crafted objects, designed commodities or buildings and entire cities.” *Exploring Visual Culture: Definitions, Concepts, Contexts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 2.

¹⁸ See, for example, the explanations and study of “visual culture” by Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999); W. J. T. Mitchell,

is the recognition that written text should not be privileged as an academic source and the realization that images and visual engagement are also important organizing principles of the world. I take this basic understanding of visual culture, which harkens back to its definition by Alpers and Baxandall, as the basis of my use of the term. By addressing the objects, people, and institutions through the lens of both material and visual culture in this project, meanwhile, I follow art historian Craig Clunas in his use of both approaches to explicate the artistic culture of the Ming Dynasty. He explains his decision as such:

Visual culture and material culture are themselves unstable and perhaps ultimately unsatisfactory categories, but this can be a source of their strength, by pointing us towards a recognition of the unstable and unsatisfactory nature of *all* categories we might reach for: “Buddhist sculpture,” “court art,” “popular religious printing,” even categories like “Chinese” itself. The things we have put into these categories have, in their very materiality, a particular set of possibilities. The ability of objects and images to move literally and physically in space and to endure in time takes them across many discursive boundaries, whether of class or gender or geographical categories. The ability of objects to act as the bearers of many different meanings of many different owners resists a simple equation of one object equals one meaning.¹⁹

Hōkyōji is a collective of religious beliefs, individuals, artwork, daily use items, architecture, ritual implements, histories, and memories. Significant objects at the convent range from Confucian books and paintings to dolls and perennially blooming flowers. Other scholars have used material and visual culture approaches to contextualize and analyze objects of religious and historical significance, notably Richard Davis, Jeffrey Hamburger, and Anne Nishimura Morse and Sam Morse, and my project is completed with acknowledgement of their studies as well.²⁰ Through examination of the materiality and visuality of certain objects I hope

Picture Theory: Essays of Verbal and Visual Representation (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), especially pages 1-110.

¹⁹ Craig Clunas, *Empire of Great Brightness: Visual and Material Cultures of Ming China, 1368-1644* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007), 15.

²⁰ Richard Davis, *The Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Jeffrey Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997); and Anne Nishimura Morse and Samuel Morse, *Object as Insight: Japanese Buddhist Art and Ritual* (Katonah, NY: Katonah Museum of Art, 1995).

to show how art and women mattered at the convent and in the early modern period. Objects were made by and for women; their continued presence allows them to be examined and mined as their materials offer clues to their meaning. At the same time, the viewing of objects and the possibility of objects being viewed marked a deep association of Hōkyōji abbesses with things – a culture of art that spanned convents, court, and Kyoto society. Both material culture and visual culture approaches together are useful means to engage the rich resources that define the Hōkyōji collection.

Summary of Chapters

Hōkyōji, as a site of women's reception and production of, and involvement in, art, is complicated by its long history; the changing significance of imperial Buddhist convents during the premodern, early modern, and modern periods; and the wealth of textual and visual information remaining in its collection. In other words, "Hōkyōji" is an umbrella term that reaches far beyond the confines of the compound and institution itself through intersecting and interweaving spheres of influence. Four chapters, therefore, address different aspects of visual culture in the convent that challenge and elucidate existing conceptions of women's art in Japan during the early modern era. These approaches are not meant to be comprehensive; other directions of inquiry are also possible, but the objects and subjects of each chapter were chosen as prime examples of material and visual culture associated with women.

The role of Hōkyōji as an institution and residence for aristocratic and high-ranking religious women in the pre- and early modern periods is discussed in Chapter One. This chapter explores the historical circumstances of the convent's origins, the occupants and their familial lineage, and the place of Hōkyōji in the visual culture of the early modern period to create a foundation on which subsequent chapter studies of objects at the convent are based. The status of the women of Hōkyōji as daughters of the most elite military and aristocratic families cannot be understated in the educational opportunities and cultural expectations of the imperial nuns. A quote from Sugimoto Etsu, the daughter of a samurai family from the province of Echigo (present-day Niigata Prefecture) in the late nineteenth century underscores how religion and gender impacted educational possibilities. Born shortly after the beginning of the Meiji Restoration, she nonetheless had an early education that mirrored that of the samurai elite of previous generations:

My sister received the usual education for girls, but mine was planned along different lines for the reason that I was supposed to be destined for a priestess. I had been born with the navel cord looped around the neck like a priest's rosary, and it was a common superstition in those days that this was a direct command from Buddha. Both my

grandmother and my mother sincerely believed this, and since in a Japanese home the ruling of the house and children is left to the women, my father silently bowed to the earnest wish of my grandmother to have me educated for a priestess. [...] My studies were from books intended only for boys, as it was very unusual for a girl to study Chinese classics. My first lessons were from the “Four Books of Confucius.” These are: *Daigaku* – “Great Learning,” which teaches that the wise use of knowledge leads to virtue; *Chuyo* – “The Unchanging Centre,” which treats of the unalterableness of universal law; *Rongo* and *Moshi* – which consist of the autobiography, anecdotes, and sayings of Confucius, gathered by his disciples. [...] Because I was having the training and studies of a boy was one of the reasons why my family got in the habit of calling me Etsu-bo, the termination *bo* being used for a boy’s name, as *ko* is for a girl’s. But my lessons were not confined to those for a boy. I also learned all the domestic accomplishments taught my sisters – sewing, weaving, embroidery, cooking, flower-arranging, and the complicated etiquette of ceremonial tea.²¹

Two important points may be noted in the above quote. The education of a nun was different from that of other women not destined for a religious life. Because Sugimoto was expected to enter a religious vocation, she learned the Chinese classics, which typically boys, not girls, studied. Her parents’ habit of calling her by a boys’ name instead of a girls’ suggests they viewed her, as a nun, as being genderless or even masculine. While Sugimoto ultimately did not enter an imperial Buddhist convent, her personal experience highlights the close link between education, gender, and a religious vocation.

The high level of education many nuns achieved affected their own production and reception of visual and material culture. While it is unclear to what degree the nuns at Hōkyōji consciously considered gender in their creation and interpretation of works of art that, at times, literally surrounded them, it should inform our study of the art at Hōkyōji. As architectural historian Daphne Spain writes: “Gendered spaces themselves shape, and are shaped by, daily activities. Once in place, they become taken for granted, unexamined, and seemingly immutable.”²² Although one may not realize how one’s gender impacts a space, the very occupation and behavior by an individual lends that space its gender. Chapter Two therefore delves deeper into the issue of gender and the reception of art, by closely examining the decorated living spaces in which the nuns at Hōkyōji performed their daily tasks.

²¹ Etsu Inagaki Sugimoto, *A Daughter of the Samurai* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1930), 17-23.

²² Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 28.

In Chapter Two, the *shōhekiga* 障壁画 (sliding door and fixed wall paintings) of the two most public rooms in Hōkyōji's *shoin*, painted with a theme of Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons, are examined to consider if, and to what extent, gender played a role in the decoration of the convent, and how these paintings may have impacted the women who lived there. Wall paintings at the imperial Buddhist convent, Reikanji 靈鑑寺, are discussed in support of the argument of the impact of gender on interior space decoration. Art historian Chino Kaori's research on the painting program in the *ōhōjō* (Main Abbot's Residence) at Nanzenji is discussed as a comparative study. Chino's pioneering studies of *shōhekiga*, architecture, and gender were inspired by earlier Euro-American feminist and theoretical scholars.²³ She was the most prominent "feminist art historian" in Japan from the mid-1990s until her untimely death in 2001.²⁴ In the early 1990s she argued for new approaches in the field of Japanese art history, which she felt relied too much on "universal" or "objective" art historical discourses that ignored groups outside the mainstream.²⁵ Much like the feminist art historians from whom she drew inspiration, Chino believed one way to exact a change in art historical scholarship was through the filter of gender.²⁶

²³ Chino cites pioneering feminist scholars such as Linda Nochlin, Laura Mulvey, Roszika Parker, and Griselda Pollock, as well as art historian, Norman Bryson, in her groundbreaking and influential essay, "Nihon bijutsu no jendā" [Gender in Japanese art], *Bijutsushi* 43, no. 2 (1994): 235-246. The article was translated and edited, with an introduction, by Joshua Mostow, "Gender in Japanese Art," *Aesthetics* 7 (1996): 49-68; and reprinted in *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field*, ed. Joshua Mostow et al. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 17-34. Melissa McCormick cites Chino's admiration of Linda Nochlin in "On the Scholarship of Chino Kaori," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*. Special Edition: *Japanese Art: The Scholarship and Legacy of Chino Kaori* 15 (December 2003): 1. In the same essay, she speculates on the influence of Judith Butler and Norman Bryson's work on Chino's scholarship. *Ibid.*, 16-17.

²⁴ Joshua S. Mostow, introduction to *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field*, 8.

²⁵ Chino, "Nihon bijutsu no jendā," 235-237.

²⁶ Gender was not the only methodology Chino used to highlight the marginalized and overlooked in Japanese art; at the end of her life Chino was involved in research of colonialist art from occupied Korea, grappling with issues of colonialism, cultural identity, and power. For remarks regarding the need to study marginalized art in Japan, see Chino, "Nihon bijutsu no jendā," 235-237. See also Chino Kaori, "Embodying Hope: Colonial Memory and Contemporary Art in Korean Museums," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*. Special

Using Chino's research as a starting point, this chapter's discussion complicates the notion of gender to incorporate class, place, and painting precedents. The Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons theme may have been suitable for the women who lived there because of the Confucian ideals of virtuous hard work, suggestions of land ownership and prosperity, and the cyclical nature of life in Buddhist ideology. Gender is seen not to be the sole, or even most important, factor in choosing a painting program theme, and social status and artistic trends are also considered in this chapter.

The discussion of gender and women's space in the second chapter leads to a focused study of the individual as producer of art, showcasing her cultural education and religious devotion. While I strive to show throughout this project that Hōkyōji is an aggregate of ideas, individuals, states of being, and objects that constantly shift in degrees of presence and importance over time, one woman — Hongakuin no miya 本覚院宮 (1672-1745) — can be seen to be a constant presence throughout this study, mainly because many of the extant objects treasured at Hōkyōji today are associated with her. As abbess, she organized the archives at Hōkyōji and recorded the convent's history. She was also a prolific calligrapher and painter who gained recognition for her artistic talent. In all, while she was not alone in creating and maintaining the convent as a site of women's artistic activity and religious prominence, she is a definitive and defining representative of the convent in words and pictures. The third chapter examines issues of production, reception, and the circulation of objects through focused studies of works of art painted by Hongakuin no miya.

The fourth chapter addresses the cultural significance both within and without the convent of one specific object, a *Tale of Genji*-themed painted incense album by Hongakuin no miya. The album carries both intensely personal meaning for the creator, while also anticipating the Genji boom in art and literature that took place in Japanese urban society from the mid-eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century. Knowing *The Genji* in visual and literary form offered entrance into the educated culture of an increasingly literate society, and through *Genji*-themed objects at Hōkyōji, it is apparent that nuns there partook of this cultural knowledge.

The presence of the Genji incense album in the convent also had two other meanings for Hongakuin no miya and later nuns. One was the personal upbringing and importance of knowledge of classical literature for the nuns. The other was the legacy of play and court tradition—dating to the late Edo period—that perpetuated the reputation and ideal lifestyle of

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an imperial princess. The trajectory the object takes from personal object of use to cultural marker is traced and discussed here.

The recent interest in the Hōkyōji collection as objects displayed in museum exhibits is the focus of the conclusion, bringing the study of the convent to the present day. The changing role of imperial Buddhist convents and the distance from the time the objects were created have helped shape the twenty-first century view of the convents as “museums” of past tradition. Certain objects are privileged for their provenance, aesthetic qualities, or religious lineage and have been displayed as representative works at Hōkyōji. This is the legacy of visual and material culture at Hōkyōji; the objects today help to give identity, tradition, and authenticity to the women who have lived there.

Prologue: A Walking Tour of Hōkyōji

On a sunny October day in 2004 I visited Hōkyōji Imperial Convent, nestled among residential buildings in the Kamigyō ward in Kyoto, for a public doll memorial service, the first time I approached the convent from the front gate. Previously I had been admitted through the *kuri* 庫裏 (temple kitchen) for a private meeting. Immediately I was struck by the compromise made to accommodate the many visitors in the convent's modern role as the Doll Temple, as which it is nationally known.²⁷ At the same time, however, I was impressed by the endurance of the building as it has stood for the last two hundred and fifteen years when it was rebuilt in 1830 after burning to the ground in the Tenmei Fire of 1788.

Hōkyōji comprises six main buildings: the *Hondō* 本堂 (main hall), *Shoin* 書院 (reception building), *Chokusakudō* 勅策堂 (chapel; also known as the Amida Hall 阿弥陀堂), *Omote genkan* 表玄関 (main entrance hall), and *Kuri genkan* 庫裏玄関 (back entrance hall; entrance to the *kuri*). (Fig. 0.2) The *hondō*, *shoin*, and *chokusakudō* enclose a central garden on three sides; a passageway flanks it on the fourth. Gardens also surround the south, east, and north walls of the three buildings. A garden with a rock arrangement representing a turtle and crane runs along the north wall of the *chokusakudō*. To the east of the *chokusakudō* is a gate that marks the entrance where Daijiin 大慈院, a now-defunct branch temple of Hōkyōji, was located.

Upon entering the convent from the south-facing gate on Teranouchidōri 寺之内通り, I passed through a front garden to reach the main entrance hall of the *hondō*. The entrance is crowned by a large sweeping roof in the *karahafu* 唐破風 style.²⁸ A smaller, unadorned entrance to the left of the *Uchi genkan* 内玄関 (main entrance) is where visitors enter today, past a foyer with glass display cases of convent souvenirs for sale in the *Shisha no ma* 使者の

²⁷ Dolls from the imperial palace were given to successive imperial princesses who entered Hōkyōji, starting with Gomizuno'o's daughter, Rishō 里昌 (1631-1656). In 1958 Hōkyōji started to hold biannual exhibitions centered around these imperial dolls (*goshō hina* 御所雛) and other Kyoto dolls (*kyōningyō* 京人形). In addition, the convent also holds an annual large-scale memorial service for all dolls in early October and offers private, daily memorial services for dolls donated by the public. These services and exhibitions have led the convent to be known nationwide as "The Doll Temple." Sawada Esai, *Hōkyōji* (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1998), 79-83.

²⁸ Karahafu refers to a cusped gable on the front of the roof.

間 (reception room for messengers from the bakufu), which acts as an entrance hall leading to the *hondō*.

The buildings of Hōkyōji as they stand now were originally built after the Tenmei fire of 1788.²⁹ The so-called Nishijin fire of 1730 (Kyōhō 15), had damaged the convent as well, but no buildings remain from the reconstruction that followed this earlier fire.³⁰ The *hondō* dates to 1830, the date written on a ridgepole inscription (*munafuda* 棟札). An entry in Hōkyōji's temple diary from 1830 (Bunsei 13) confirms that construction of the *Gokyakuden* 御客殿 (guest hall), *Gokurumayose* 御車寄 (carriage entrance), and *Godaidokoro* 御台所 (kitchen) began on the eighteenth day of the sixth month of Bunsei 13. The entrance and kitchen were completed on the twenty-second day of the eighth month, and the guest hall was finished on the tenth day of the eleventh month of the same year.³¹ These buildings correspond to the present *hondō*, *genkan*, and *kuri*.

On my visit that October day, I passed a large glass case displaying an Edo-period kimono on loan from the Kyoto Costume Museum in the passageway leading to the *hondō*, a reminder of the public function of the convent today. During the spring opening, one of the two times the convent is open to the public, the glass case might house an elaborate *hina matsuri* doll display.³² The veranda, which wraps around the south side of the *hondō*, lies beyond the glass case.

The *hondō* was built in a *hōjō* 方丈 style. (Fig 0.3) The residence of the abbess or abbot of a temple, the *hōjō* became an important architectural type in Zen temples in the Muromachi period.³³ Characteristic of *hōjō* architecture, the *hondō* is divided into six rooms,

²⁹ Fujizawa Akira, *Hōkyōji kenzōbutsu chōsa hōkokusho* [A report on a survey of Hōkyōji architectural structures] (Kyoto: Kyōto Daigaku Kōgakubu Kenchikugaku Kyōshitsu, 1993), 1.

³⁰ From the scant documentary evidence of an inscription on the upper ridgepole from the reconstruction of the washroom (Seijo 清所), we know that this building was reconstructed in 1782. *Ibid.*, 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 2, 15.

³² The girls' festival is held on March 3 in Japan. Hōkyōji has public viewing of its doll displays during the month of March. In March, 2005, the glass case held a tiered doll set, including a seated emperor and empress doll at the top, with attendants and vassals seated on tiers corresponding to their rank below. In the *hondō* various other imperial dolls and town dolls (*machi hina* 町雛) were displayed.

³³ Kawakami Mitsugu discusses the development of *hōjō* architecture in *Zen'in no kenchiku: Zensō no sumai to saikyō* [Architecture of Zen temples: residences and worship spaces of Zen priests] (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2005), 107-115. For an introduction to *hōjō*

three on the south side and three on the north, with the central ritual space, the *Chūōshitsu*, as the main room of the building.

From the veranda I admired the convent's largest garden, which borders the south wall of the *hondō*. The garden is covered with moss and lined with camellia trees said by temple tradition to be from the Edo period, suggesting that the garden has not changed fundamentally since the rebuilding of the *hondō*.³⁴ The camellia trees and a row of potted *nadeshiko* 撫子 (Chinese Pinks), cultivated perennially from seeds given to Hōkyōji by Emperor Kōkaku 光格天皇 (1771-1840), are today considered temple treasures and attract visitors to the convent when it is open for public viewing.

The three south-facing rooms of the *hondō* are, from west to east, the *Gekan* 下間 (lower space; the room closest to the entrance hall), the *Chūōshitsu* 中央室 (central room; the most public space of the building), and the *Jōkan* 上間 (upper space). North-facing, "inner" rooms (*okushitsu* 奥室) mirror these spaces: the *Gekan okushitsu* 下間奥室, the *Chūōkitashitsu* 中央北室, and the *Jōkan okushitsu* 上間奥室. The *chūōkitashitsu* includes the *Butsunoma* 仏の間 (altar room), where the main image (*honzon* 本尊) is housed. (Fig. 0.4) The main icon of *Shōkanzeon bosatsu* (聖觀世音菩薩; *Arya-Avalokiteśvara*) occupies the central space of the altar. According to convent legend, the icon is said to have been caught in a fishing net at Futami Bay 二見湾 in Ise during Emperor Kōgon's (光嚴天皇) reign (1331-1333). Because the icon carries a small round mirror in its lap, the convent was named Hōkyōji (Temple of the Treasured Mirror).³⁵ The bodhisattva image is flanked on the west by an image of Sakyamuni Buddha 釈迦如来 and on the east by mortuary tablets (*ihai* 位牌) of the founder and subsequent abbesses in the convent lineage.

From the veranda to the east of the *hondō* I entered the *Chokusakudō*. Literally meaning "The Hall Built upon Imperial Order," the *chokusakudō* was a chapel that was added onto the convent in the early 1800s. The building was originally a room at the palace of Emperor Kōkaku 光格 (1770-1840; r. 1779-1817), built at his request to house an image of the Amida Nyorai.³⁶ It was brought to Hōkyōji in 1847 after the death of Kōkaku's son, Emperor

architecture in English, see Bruce Coats, "The Architecture of Zen-sect Buddhist Monasteries in Japan, 1200-1500" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1985), and Martin Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 197-201.

³⁴ Sawada, *Hōkyōji*, 74.

³⁵ Ibid., 73. This legend is repeated in other modern sources, such as Tokunaga Ryūhei, "Hōkyōji," in *Nyonin no tera* [Temples for women] (Tokyo: Nichibō Shuppansha, 1976), 214.

³⁶ Sawada, *Hōkyōji*, 67.

Ninkō 仁孝天皇 (r. 1817-1846) to accommodate Kōkaku's daughter and Ninkō's sister, Kin no miya 欽宮 (1824-1842), the twenty-fourth abbess of Hōkyōji.³⁷ The *chokusakudō* may have replaced an earlier building on the same site. Entries in the *Jiin meisaichō* 寺院明細帳 [Registries of Buddhist temples; 1885) and *Kyōtobō mokushi* 京都坊目誌 [Journal by a Kyoto monk; 1916) refer to the renovation and renaming of a structure called the Subutsudō 素仏堂, erected in 1796 through the will of Kyōreimon'in 恭礼問院 (1743-1796),³⁸ the chief consort of Emperor Momozono 桃園天皇 (1741-1762; r. 1747-1762) and the mother of Emperor Go-Momozono 後桃園天皇 (1758-1779; r. 1771-1779).³⁹ Entries in *Hōkyōji on'nikki* 宝鏡寺御日記, a convent diary at Hōkyōji, for the twenty-seventh day of the sixth month and the seventh day of the eighth month of 1847 refer to funds and materials needed for the building's renovation after the donation of Kōkaku's Amida Nyorai icon to the convent.⁴⁰ Another entry dated the twenty-seventh day of the tenth month of the same year notes the enshrinement of the icon in the building, and an entry on the nineteenth day of the twelfth month notes the performance of the icon's enshrinement ceremony (*nyūbutsu kuyō* 入仏供養).⁴¹

The *chokusakudō* has two rooms, with a ten-tatami room facing the altar room. (Fig. 0.5) On the altar stands the main image of Amida, next to which is a wood statue of Emperor Go-Kogen's principal consort, Sūkenmon'in 崇賢門院 (1339-1427) and her mortuary tablet. (Fig. 0.6) Sūkenmon'in founded Daijiin 大慈院, a branch temple of Hōkyōji affiliated with the Ashikaga family during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The two convents enjoyed a close relationship until Daijiin was amalgamated with Hōkyōji during the early Meiji period.⁴² Today only part of the entrance to Daijiin remains to the east of the *chokusakudō*, but it was at

³⁷ Princess Kin's Buddhist name was Sanmajiin no miya Reigon Rikinni Dai Zenshi 三摩地院宮靈巖理欽尼大禪師. She is also known as Rikin.

³⁸ Kyōreimon'in's birth name was Fujiwara Tomiko 藤原富子. She was from the Ichijō 一条 family; her father was Ichijō Kaneyoshi (Kaneka) 一条兼香 (1693-1751) and her mother was the daughter of Asukai Masatoyo 飛鳥井雅豊 (1664-1712).

³⁹ *Jiin meisaichō* (Kyoto Furitsu Sōgō Shiryōkanjo), cited in Fujizawa, *Hōkyōji kenzōbutsu chōsa hōkokusho*, 9-10; *Kyōtobō mokushi*, in *Shinshū Kyōto sōsho*, vol. 18, ed. Noma Kōshin (Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1968), 114.

⁴⁰ Fujizawa, *Hōkyōji kenzōbutsu chōsa hōkokusho*, 10.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Daijiin was closed during the early Meiji period when imperial clergy were returned to their families, and monzeki temples and convents were deinstitutionalized as part of the movement to separate Shintō and Buddhist religions (*Shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離). See Introduction, f.n. 72.

one time a temple complex comprised of seven buildings.⁴³ The wood statues of Daijiin's founder, Sūkenmon'in, and Hino Tomiko 日野富子 (1440-1496) were moved to the *chokusakudō* after Daijiin was closed.⁴⁴

The passageway in front of the *chokusakudō* abuts the entrance to the *shoin* with a narrow doorway and floor levels that do not match evenly. The awkward transition is a reminder of the later addition of the chapel to the main building. The passageway leads to a veranda overlooking the central courtyard. It is in this courtyard that a persimmon tree said to be given by Emperor Go-mizunoo 後水尾天皇 (1596-1680; r. 1611-1629) still bears fruit today.⁴⁵ (Fig. 0.7)

I entered the *shoin* to the north of the courtyard. According to a ridgepole inscription for the building found during an architectural survey of the site in 1993, the *shoin* was rebuilt in 1798, with the ridgepole erected on the fourteenth day of the third month. An entry in Hōkyōji's temple diary confirms this date; another entry for the ninth day of the twelfth month of the same year records the completion of the reconstruction.⁴⁶

The *shoin* is laid out in three rows of rooms running east-west.⁴⁷ (Fig. 0.8) The rooms on the farthest east were where abbesses would receive visitors; they were the most public rooms. These rooms are from the north, respectively, the *Gozanoma* 御座ノ間, which contains a tokonoma (alcove) and staggered shelves, the *Ōhiroma* 大広間, and the *Jō no goenzashiki* 上ノ御縁座敷. The two former rooms have a program of sliding door panels decorated with paintings of the annual cycle of rice cultivation.⁴⁸ Along with other visitors I was able to stand in the passageway along the easternmost rooms and appreciate the progression of the farming theme through them. Sunlight is filtered through *shōji* windows on the outside wall. Life-sized dolls in court attire had been placed on the floor of the *ōhiroma* amid scattered shells from the shell matching game (*kaiawase* 貝合) to show how the rooms might have been utilized.

To the west of these large spaces are smaller, more private rooms named after the painting themes on their walls: (from the north) the *Sarunoma* 猿ノ間 (Monkey Room), the *Niwatorinoma* 鶏ノ間 (Hen Room), and the *Tsurunoma* 鶴ノ間 (Crane Room). The Crane

⁴³ Sawada, *Hōkyōji*, 67.

⁴⁴ See “Hōkyōji's Historical Affiliations with the Ashikaga, Daijiin, and Keiaji” in Chapter One for more information about Daijiin.

⁴⁵ Sawada, *Hōkyōji*, 74.

⁴⁶ Fujizawa, *Hōkyōji kenzōbutsu chōsa hōkokusho*, 7.

⁴⁷ The following section is based on personal examination and Fujizawa, *Hōkyōji kenzōbutsu chōsa hōkokusho*, 8.

⁴⁸ The *shoin* and its architectural program will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

Room is where I was first admitted for a private audience with the Hōkyōji abbess, Tanaka Ekō, in 2002. It is a short walk from the *kuri* and the private parking lot that flanks the west side of the convent. Cedar doors along the corridor fronting these rooms include images of roosters and puppies painted by a student of Maruyama Ōkyo.⁴⁹ The westernmost row of rooms are reserved for the most private, daily needs and are from the north the *Gokyakunoma* 御客ノ間, the *Gofukunoma* 呉服ノ間, the *Godaisunoma* 御台子ノ間, and the *Gosanma* 御三間. Other service areas and a hallway connecting back to the entrance foyer complete the *shoin*.

Visits to the convent during public viewing times in the spring and fall follow the same route I've described and include different objects on display, dance, and ritual performances. Reflecting on the public opening, I notice how concessions have been made by the convent to provide access to tourists. The convent now has glass display cases to protect the valuable doll collection and provide a suitable viewing area for viewers. Souvenirs are also available for purchase in the front foyer in more glass cases. It is also evident, however, that great care has gone into preserving the character and nature of the Edo-period convent. The room configuration has not changed since its Tenmei rebuilding. Aside from the *hondō*, the paintings on the walls of the other rooms remain intact. The desire to keep the convent as “traditional” as possible in light of the convent’s changing functions seems to parallel accommodations to the public today. Rather than lessen the experience of visiting the convent, this juxtaposition of “old” and contemporary proves to be a timely and apt indication of the history of the convent as it must be perceived today. I am reminded that I can only look back at the convent through the contemporary window through which I am allowed to view it. My study of the convent and the material and visual culture so important to its female occupants is, therefore, always examined with this in mind.

⁴⁹ Temple tradition attributes the cedar door paintings to Maruyama Ōkyo (1733-1795), but given the completion date of 1798, the doors either postdate him, or he would have been very near the end of his life when they were executed. It is more likely they were executed by a member of his school.

Chapter One
Hōkyōji – Its Origins and Place in the Imperial Capital:
The Convent as a Site of Women’s Authority

Before examination of the visual culture of an imperial Buddhist convent during the early modern period can take place, it is useful to situate Hōkyōji – as a religious institution, residence for an imperial nun and princess, and site of women’s legacy in art and religion – in the place and history of Kyoto. The subsequent chapters will address the role visual culture played in the lives of women at Hōkyōji through close examination of the architecture and art objects associated with the convent. This chapter focuses on the institution itself. An understanding of the groups to which the women of Hōkyōji belonged and the religious and social positions which Hōkyōji attained will provide a necessary foundation from which to begin further exploration of the relationship between art and women in Japan during the early modern period.

As a site of female agency, Hōkyōji is largely neglected in the current histories of early modern Japan. Political power lay with male descendents of ruling patriarchs: the Ashikaga and Tokugawa shoguns and the emperor and aristocrats. Through ranks and abbacies at officially-sanctioned temples, the power structure was solidified among an elite level of noble and military aristocrats. Individual women, unable to achieve official ranks of ruling authority, nonetheless appear sporadically in the record as wives, consorts, daughters, and mothers, although their numbers are few and their achievements mostly anecdotal.

In fact, the nuns of Hōkyōji, members of the military and imperial elite, gave the convent cultural and social authority. Relationships with family members connected the nuns to the court, and this social standing offered opportunities for cultural edification reserved for the highest-ranked members of society. The choice made for these princesses to enter religious service also freed them from social restrictions of the court, while requiring them to abide by the rules and lifestyle of their religious order. The women at convents thus had the rarefied perspective of participants with both religious training and elite cultural education.

Their unique social standing gave the nuns of Hōkyōji a degree of informal authority and power to make changes in matters of politics or culture. Informal authority is a term that paraphrases and parallels Daniel Sorid’s notion of informal power, which suggests effective management policy through non-official channels, such as personal relationships and the bond

of obligation.⁵⁰ Sorid, in turn, bases his hierarchy of power on the concept of a “taxonomy of power” formulated by social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven. French and Raven found that social power “is limited to influence on the person, produced by a social agent, [which] can be either another person, a role, a norm, a group of a part of a group.”⁵¹ In other words, power is relational and dependent on personal influence over other individuals. Power is also directly informed by authority — one’s right to assume one’s position of power. For my analysis, French and Raven’s notion of relational power is especially apt. Through personal alliances and reputations for power, which were based on familial relationships and religious lineage, nuns gained informal power and authority of historical significance.

Sorid, French, and Raven discuss the structure of power mainly in the modern workplace, but their studies are also pertinent to the study of the social and cultural power and authority at convents. It is necessary to keep in mind that power and authority are nebulous terms, best used with qualifications to better understand the social spheres in which they bear relevance. Both words suggest the impact of history or milieu and control and influence over others. Here concepts of power and authority are discussed with modifiers to provide parameters of scope. By looking at Hōkyōji in early modern Japan through its position within overlapping spheres of influence — social, political, spatial/visual, religious — its place at the nexus of power structures that were chronicled in the historical record is clarified.

The history, individuals, and objects connected to the convent contribute to what Hōkyōji is — not a static piece of architecture, but a vibrant, changing place that has had diverse meanings at different times according to historical circumstances. The women who lived at the convent changed its rank and status; the institution is also characterized, however, by its standing among contemporary convents and through its connection with Keiaiji 景愛寺, an official, high-ranking convent active during the fifteenth century. As one of twelve imperial Buddhist convents during the early Edo period, Hōkyōji occupied a place within a group of similarly elite, imperial or noble-connected religious institutions.⁵²

⁵⁰ See Daniel Sorid, “The Authority That’s Not on Any Chart,” *New York Times* (August 8, 2009).

⁵¹ John French and Bertram Raven, “The Bases of Social Power,” in *Studies in Social Power*, ed. Dorwin Cartwright (Ann Arbor, MI: Research Center for Group Dynamics, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1959), 150-167. The five bases of social power as set forth by French and Raven are: legitimate, reward, expert, referent, and coercive.

⁵² It is important to note that the *bikuni gosho* belong to different Buddhist schools, meaning they were classified as a group for reasons that extended beyond sectarian affiliation. In the

Although not as visible as the large temples that dotted the Kyoto cityscape or as politically influential as premodern monzeki temples, Hōkyōji—through its bakufu and imperial connections and its network of elite Buddhist institutions—gained prominence in the cultural landscape. Hōkyōji’s presence in the premodern capital is evident in its appearance on two *rakuchū rakugaizu* 洛中洛外図, or paintings depicting scenes of the capital, which were most likely seen by members of the aristocracy and military elite: the Machida Screens (first half sixteenth century) and Uesugi screens (sixteenth century).⁵³ By the seventeenth century, Hōkyōji also appeared in guidebooks to Kyoto, which were available to a much wider commoner audience, such as the *Kyo Habutae* 京羽二重 [Kyoto brocade] (1685) and *Yamashiro meishō shi* 山城名勝志 [Descriptions of places of scenic beauty in Yamashiro] (1711).⁵⁴ In this way it held authority of presence: its contemporaneous visibility in print placed it in the consciousness of literate members of society familiar with these popular texts.

It is productive to think of Hōkyōji from its inception in the late fourteenth century to the modern period in terms of the networks to which it belonged, some of them overlapping, some of them defined by personal or religious connections. A convent diary from Hōkyōji written in 1660 offers information about the daily life of the nuns at the convent, while study of the contemporary *rakuchū rakugaizu* paintings and guidebooks will provide perspectives beyond the convent walls during the early modern period. The spheres of influence formed around and through the convent help to situate it – temporally, spatially, historically – in Kyoto, which in turn, lays the foundation for effective discussion of the visual and material culture of the convent.

mid-eighteenth century, three more *bikuni gosho* were recognized by the bakufu, for a total of fifteen *bikuni gosho* active until the end of the Edo period.

⁵³ McKelway argues that the Machida Screens and Uesugi Screens were most likely painted for Ashikaga patrons. See *Capitalscapes: Folding Screens and Political Imagination in Late Medieval Kyoto* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006), 46-142.

⁵⁴ Both *Kyō habutae* and *Yamashiro meishō shi* are published in Noma Kōshin, ed., *Shinshū Kyōto soshō*, vol. 2 and 13 (Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1967-1976). “Kyoto brocade” is Elizabeth Berry’s translation.

The Institutional Origins of Hōkyōji

While the present-day buildings of Hōkyōji date to the late eighteenth century, the origin of the institution itself can be traced to approximately 1368-1375. Its long history from the fourteenth century to the present has seen it change nominally from a *bikuni gosho* to an *ama monzeki jiin* 尼門跡寺院 (imperial Buddhist convent). These appellations place it within the aristocratic circle of society while also indicating the status of its occupants at various moments.

Conflicting stories relate the convent's establishment. *Seizan ryakuenki narabi rekidai* 西山略縁記并歴代 [A brief account of the origin of Hōkyōji and lineage succession], a history of the temple's founding kept at Hōkyōji, states it was founded by Karin-no-miya Egon Zenni 華林の宮恵嚴禪尼, the daughter of Emperor Kōgon 光嚴天皇 (r. 1331-1333) of the Northern Court and the sixth-generation abbess at the convent, Keiaiji.⁵⁵ Through this connection, the convent traces its lineage back to Mugai Nyodai 無外如大 (1223-1298), the founder of Keiaiji.⁵⁶ An alternative origin story relates that Hōkyōji was first erected by the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu 足利義満 (1358-1408) as the enshrinement spot for the mortuary tablet of Ashikaga Yoshiakira 義詮 (1330-1367), the second shogun and Yoshimitsu's father. Yoshimitsu's sister, the nun Katsurabayashi Eshōni 桂林惠昌尼, became the first-generation abbess of the convent, making it the first convent associated with the Muromachi shogunal family.⁵⁷ In temple histories, Eshō appears as the seventh-generation abbess of Hōkyōji.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Seizan ryakuenki narabi rekidai* (Kyoto: Hōkyōji Imperial Buddhist Convent, n.d.), 13.

Although the document is undated, references within the text to an event that happened in 1903 date it to at least the late Meiji period.

⁵⁶ Ibid. Oka Yoshiko convincingly argues that the twenty-second abbess, Tokugon Rihō (Hongakuin no miya), edited Hōkyōji's genealogy of abbesses in the early eighteenth century to include Keiaiji and Daijiin as a means to situate Hōkyōji in Keiaiji's lineage. Based on the genealogies created by Hongakuin no miya, the later text "Ama Gozan Keiaiji denkei Seizan Hōkyōji teidai keifu jiseki" [Traces of a genealogy of successive generations of Seizan Hōkyōji, descended from Ama Gozan Keiaiji], was edited in 1869 or 1870 by a priest at Shōkokuji, to which Hōkyōji was affiliated at the time. In other words, it appears that the lineages for Hōkyōji kept at the convent to which the modern-day genealogies conform date back to the early eighteenth century. See Oka, "Kinsei no bikuni gosho (jō)," 35-56.

⁵⁷ Kokushi Daijiten Henshū Iinkai, *Kokushi daijiten*, 14 vols. (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1993), 12:560. See also *Shūkyō seido chōsa shiryō*, 9 vols. (Tōkyō: Monbushō Shūkyōkyoku, 1977-8), 7:52.

⁵⁸ *Seizan ryakuenki narabi rekidai*, 14.

The original location of Hōkyōji was in the Saga district of Western Kyoto, to the west of Rokuōin 鹿王院, a Rinzai Zen temple founded by Ashikaga Yoshimitsu in 1380. A map of the monastery Tenryūji, with which Rokuōin was affiliated, circa 1425, shows its location among other temples and convents.⁵⁹ (Fig 1.1) It is unknown exactly when it was brought to its present location in the Nishijin district, but it is thought that it was moved next to the convent Daijūin because of the latter's affiliation with Hino Tomiko.⁶⁰ The move was thus completed probably around the late fifteenth century.⁶¹ When Hōkyōji moved to Nishijin, it was also referred to as the *Dodo* (or *Momo*) *Gosho* 百々御所 after the neighborhood in which it was located.⁶² It has the temple name of Seizan Hōkyōji 西山宝鏡寺.⁶³ Possession of both a

⁵⁹ A reprint of this map can be seen in Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, Kyūshū Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, and Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, ed. “*Kyōto Gozan Zen no bunka*” ten: *Ashikaga Yoshimitsu roppyakunen goki kinen = Zen treasures from the Kyoto Gozan temples*. Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 2007, 150. The map is also redrawn in *Hotoke to onna*, 150.

⁶⁰ Oka, “Kinsei no bikuni gosho (ge),” 5. Hino Tomiko was the principal consort of the eighth Ashikaga shogun, Yoshimasa 足利義政 (1436–1490), and the mother of the ninth shogun, Yoshihisa 足利義尚 (1465–1489). Her father was the twenty-third head of the Hino family, Shigemasa 日野重政 (d. 1443) and her mother was Kitaoji Mitsuko 北小路苗子. Tomiko is known primarily in the historical record as an instigator in the Ōnin War (1467–1477) arising from a political faction built around her son which opposed the newly appointed shogun, Yoshimi 足利義視 (1431–1491), Yoshimasa's appointed successor. See, Shimura Kunihiro, *Ōninki* [The chronicle of Ōnin] (Tōkyō: Benseisha, 1994), especially 26–28; Mary Elizabeth Berry, *The Culture of Civil War in Kyoto* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 11–24; Donald Keene, *Yoshimasa and the Silver Pavilion: The Creation of the Soul of Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 47–60; and Paul Varley, *The Ōnin War: History of its Origins and Background with a Selective Translation of the Chronicle of Ōnin* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967).

⁶¹ Komine Kazuaki places the move slightly later during the early sixteenth century, in “Amadera no chōsa to *Genji monogatari*” [The Tale of Genji in convent surveys], *Murasaki* 34 (Dec. 1997): 60.

⁶² Sawada, *Hōkyōji*, 66. Tokunaga suggests the temple was called *Momogosho* during the early modern period. *Nyonin no tera*, 215.

⁶³ “Seizan” means “Western Mountain.” It is the *sangō* 山号, or mountain name, that is given to all Buddhist monasteries in East Asia. Nakamura Hajime et al., ed., *Iwanami Bukkyō jiten* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1989), 314.

temple and palace name, a convention among monzeki temples, reflects the convent's dual roles as a private residence for imperial or aristocratic women and as a religious institution for tonsured women.

What's in a Name? *Bikuni gosho/Ama monzeki* in Kyoto

Hōkyōji belongs to a system of temples and convents known today as *monzeki jiin* 門跡寺院 or *ama monzeki jiin* 尼門跡寺院, respectively. *Monzeki* temples for men served an important role in Kyoto temple history from the eleventh to nineteenth centuries as a place for members of the aristocracy to pursue religious study while also retaining political power.⁶⁴ *Monzeki* convents were also known as *bikuni gosho*. As both appellations illustrate the functions of Hōkyōji, this section will deal with the different names given to Hōkyōji from its inception to the present.

Other scholars have studied the role of *monzeki* temples in the medieval and early modern periods; a brief history of the *monzeki* temple and the *bikuni gosho* is provided here to outline the social, political, and religious status of nuns who lived at imperial Buddhist convents during the medieval and early modern periods.⁶⁵ The term *monzeki* comes from *mon no seki* 門の跡, and the *mon* 門 is an abbreviation of the term *monha* 門葉, *monpa* 門派, or *monryū* 門流 (followers of a particular tradition), which denotes disciples continuing the teachings of a master.⁶⁶ The term *monzeki* is sometimes defined as a temple passed down through family lineages of priest-princes (*hōshinnō* 法親王), but some temples where members of the imperial family live do not carry the designation of “*monzeki*,” so that definition is incomplete. By the fourteenth century, *monzeki* temples housed members of the imperial family. In his proclamation for conduct by the Emperor and nobility, *Kinchū narabi ni kuge*

⁶⁴ Mikael Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 72.

⁶⁵ For information about the *monzeki* temple system in English see, for example, Jacqueline Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 112-114; Allan G. Grapard, *The Protocol of the Gods: A Study of the Kasuga Cult in Japanese History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 107-109; and Adolphson, *The Gates of Power*, 71. In Japanese, see Sano Keisaku, *Kōshitsu to jiin* [The imperial house and temples] (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1939); Inokuchi Yūichi, *Nimonzeki no gengo seikatsu no chōsa kenkyū* [Research on the speech of aristocratic women in imperial Buddhist convents] (Tokyo: Kazama Shobō, 1965); and *Kokushi daijiten*, 13: 903.

⁶⁶ Sano, *Kōshitsu to jiin*, 229. See also *Shūkyō seido chōsa shiryō*, 7:29. Adolphson translates the term as “noble cloisters” in *The Gates of Power*, 71, 419.

shohatto [Regulations for the emperor and nobility], set forth in 1615, the first Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1543-1616), specified that, in addition to imperial family members, the aristocracy could enter temples designated as *monzeki*.⁶⁷ Three types of *monzeki* temples emerged from this distinction: *miya monzeki* 宮門跡, reserved for members of the imperial and noble families; *sekke monzeki* 撰家門跡, which housed members of the five regent houses (*go-sekke* 五撰家) and nine other aristocratic houses (*seigake* 清華家), if adopted by the regent houses first; and *jun monzeki* 准門跡, for the abbots of the Jōdo (Pure Land) temple Honganji 本願寺.⁶⁸

The first recorded temple identified as *monzeki* was Ichijōin 一乗院, founded between 978 and 983 by the monk Jōshū, the son of the Minister of the Left Fujiwara no Moroyasu.⁶⁹ From that time, *monzeki* temples became places where imperial or noble men lived. While physically removed from the political center of the court, these princes stayed connected through familial, intellectual, and cultural ties and retained political and cultural power with court titles (offices) and income. Today there are twenty-four active *monzeki* temples.⁷⁰

During the Nanbokuchō period (Period of Southern and Northern Courts; 1336-1392), *bikuni gosho* were convents created for women of aristocratic or imperial standing. The term *bikuni* is derived from *biku* 比丘 (Sk. *bhikku*), a word used to denote one who follows Buddhist precepts, and *ama* or *ni* 尼, which indicates a female follower. In Japanese *bikuni* is used interchangeably with *ama*.⁷¹ During the Edo period, convents were either called by their temple name or *bikuni gosho*, as well as *bikuni on monzeki* 比丘尼御門跡 and *kuro gosho* 黒御所. In 1871 (Meiji 4) the *monzeki* and *bikuni gosho* systems were abolished during the state

⁶⁷ For a translation and detailed explanation of the preparation and articles of the *Kuge shohatto*, see Lee Butler, *Emperor and Aristocracy in Japan, 1467-1680* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 200-224. See also *Dai Nihon shiryō*, pt. 22, ed. Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku, 1922), 12:161-165.

⁶⁸ Monbushō shūkyōkyoku, ed., *Shūkyō seido chōsa shiryō*, 7:32-39. The five regent houses are the Konoe 近衛, Takatsukasa 鷹司, Nijō 二条, Ichijō 一条, and Kujō 九条. The nine aristocratic families are the Tenpōrinsanjō 転法輪三條, Kikutei 菊亭, Ōinomikado 大炊御門, Kazan'in 花山院, Tokudaiji 徳大寺, Saionji 西園寺, Daigo 醍醐, Koga 久我, and Hirohata 広幡.

⁶⁹ Adolphson, *Gates of Power*, 72.

⁷⁰ Of these, eleven are Tendai-school affiliated, five are Shingon, one is Jōdo, one is Rinzai Zen, five are Shinshū sects, and one is unaffiliated. *Ibid.*, 39-40.

⁷¹ Araki Ryōsen, *Bikunishi [A history of nuns]* (Tokyo: Bukkyō Geijutsusha), 6.

policy of the separation of Buddhism and Shintō (*Shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離).⁷² Two years later, however, *ex-bikuni gosho* were permitted to reinstate their abbesses, and in 1888, temples were allowed to reclaim the title of *monzeki*, without direct imperial connection.⁷³ The following year, in 1889, the term *ama monzeki* 尼門跡 was officially adopted for general use.⁷⁴

⁷² In order to restore imperial hegemony after the defeat of the Tokugawa bakufu in 1868, the policy of *Shinbutsu bunri*, the separation of Shintō and Buddhism, was initiated by the Meiji government beginning in the third month of 1868. The denigration of Buddhism quickly escalated into actions of “abolishment of Buddhism and the demolition of Sākyamuni” (*haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈) with drastic consequences for Buddhist temples and clergy as temples were shut and icons and art treasures taken or lost. For more information about the State-issued edicts separating Shintō and Buddhism and the phenomenon of *haibutsu kishaku*, see Tamamuro Fumio, *Shinbutsu bunri* [The separation of Shintō and Buddhism] (Tokyo: Kyōikusha, 1997); and Shibata Dōken, *Haibutsu kishaku* [The abolishment of Buddhism and the demolition of Sākyamuni] (Tokyo: Kōronsha, 1978). In English see James Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and its Persecution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 1990, especially 43-86; Martin Collcutt, “Buddhism: The Threat of Eradication,” in *Japan in Transition, from Tokugawa to Meiji*, ed. Marius B. Jansen and Gilbert Rozman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 143-167; Helen Hardacre, *Shintō and the State, 1868-1988* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 27-28; and Allan G. Grapard, “Japan’s Ignored Cultural Revolution: The Separation of Shinto and Buddhist Divinities in Meiji (“Shinbutsu Bunri”) and a Case Study: Tōnomine,” *History of Religions* 23, no. 3 (Feb. 1984): 240-265.

⁷³ Oka, “Kinsei no bikuni gosho (jō),” 41. See also Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *Above the Clouds: Status Culture of the Modern Japanese Nobility* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 132-137; and Sano Keisaku, *Kōshitsu to jūin*, 281.

⁷⁴ Oka, “Kinsei bikuni gosho no sōshiki,” 69. On the historiographical usage of the terms “*ama monzeki*” and “*bikuni gosho*,” see *ibid.*, 30-34. For a discussion on the chronology of terminology for imperial and aristocratic convents see Takebe Toshio, “Amadera jūin no enkaku,” [The origins of convents] in *Monzeki amadera no meihō* [Treasures of imperial Buddhist convents], ed. Kasumikaikan Shiryōten Inkaï (Tokyo: Kasumi Kaikan, 1992), 163-164; Sano Keisaku, *Kōshitsu to jūin*, 275-277; and Cogan, “Precepts and Power,” 128-133. A recent article by Aoya Miwa details the transition from *bikuni gosho* to *ama monzeki jūin* during the period of the abolishment of the *monzeki* system from 1871 to 1888. See Aoya, “Amadera no Meiji: Bikuni gosho kara ama monzeki e” [Convents in the Meiji period: from

While *bikuni gosho* were not codified as such until the early modern period, the majority of them existed in principle from the fourteenth century. The earliest imperial Buddhist convent may be Chūgūji in Nara, converted from the palace of Prince Shōtoku's mother, Anohobe no hashihito kōgō 穴穂部間人皇后, in 621.⁷⁵ By the beginning of the eighteenth century there were twelve imperial convents: Daishōji 大聖寺, Hōkyōji 宝鏡寺, Donkein 曇華院, Kōshōin 光照院, Reikanji 靈鑑寺, Enshōji 円照寺, Rinkyūji 林丘寺, Chūgūji 中宮寺, Jijūin 慈受院, Sanjichionji 三時智恩寺, Hokkeji 法華寺, and Zuiryūji 瑞龍寺. Three more—Onjiin 恩慈院, Hōjiin 宝慈院, and Honkōin 本光院—were added in the Hōreki period 宝曆 (1751-1764). Of these, Enshōji became a *monzeki* convent and Onjiin was eventually consolidated with Jijūin.⁷⁶ Sennyūji 泉涌寺 and Zenchiin 禪智院 were added to comprise the fifteen convents associated with nobility known today. In the Meiji period, these convents were also called *yuisho jiin* 由緒寺院 (lineage temples), for their connection to the imperial family.⁷⁷

In the medieval period, *bikuni gosho* were divided into residences for imperial women (*miya no ondera* 宮之御寺) and those for women from samurai families (*buke no ondera* 武家之御寺). The former included Daishōji, Anzenji 安禪寺, and Daijikōin 大慈光院. Hōkyōji and Daijiin were included in the latter.⁷⁸ Oishi Masaaki claims that *bikuni gosho* were built after the second half of the fourteenth century for the purposes of giving unmarried women an alternative place to live apart from court.⁷⁹ Oka Yoshiko, however, asserts that the term “*bikuni gosho*” refers to the women, not the temples where they lived. In other words, the

“*bikuni gosho*” to “*ama monzeki*”], *Nihon no shūkyō to jendā ni kansuru kokusai sōgō kenkyū*, 1:66-81.

⁷⁵ Sano, *Koshitsu to jiin*, 281. Although Chūguji had a history of imperial women living there, it traces its origins as a *monzeki* convent to 1602, when Jikakuin no miya 慈覺院宮 lived there.

⁷⁶ *Shūkyō seido chōsa shiryō*, 7:42. These *bikuni gosho* do not reflect branch temples affiliated with them.

⁷⁷ Yuisho temples in the Meiji period included Chūgūji, Kōshōin, Donkein, Rinkyūji, Daishōji, Hōkyōji, Reikanji, Honkōin, Hōkkeji, Sanjichionji, Jijūin, Sōjiin 惣持院, Hōjiin, Zuiryūji, Senryūji, Zenchiin, and Enshōji. See Sanō, *Kōshitsu to jiin*, 288-289.

⁷⁸ Hōkyōji and Daijiin in particular had strong connections to the Ashikaga family. For a discussion on the distinction between court and samurai convents in the late medieval period, see Oka, “Kinsei no *bikuni gosho* (ge),” 10-12.

⁷⁹ Oishi Masaaki, “*Bikuni gosho to Muromachi bakufu: Ama Gozan Tsūgenji o chūshin ni shite*” [Nun-palaces and the Muromachi bakufu: a study of the *ama gozan* temple, Tsūgenji], *Nihonshi kenkyū* 335 (July, 1990): 26 and f.n. 1: 27-28.

name of the buildings came from its occupants, not the other way around.⁸⁰ Indeed, *bikuni goshō* seemed to have a dual role as both private residence and religious institution. The close connection between building nomenclature and particular individuals is corroborated in the changing list of convents from the medieval through Edo periods as convents were converted to temples, closed or erected as their occupants changed.⁸¹

The status of *bikuni goshō* changed from the medieval to the early modern period. By the beginning of the Edo period, the designation of *bikuni goshō* was subject to three criteria: 1) An imperial or noble abbess; 2) control of the convent given from the bakufu to a noble or the imperial family; and 3) a land title signed with a vermilion seal from the bakufu (*shuinjō* 朱印状).⁸² Hōkyōji, associated with the Ashikaga family from its origin in the fifteenth century, became an imperial convent in the beginning of the seventeenth century. A document from 1634 (Kan'ei 11) entitled *Bikuni goshō shutsuji nado kakiage hikae* 比丘尼御所出自等書上控之 [A memorandum on the origins of *bikuni goshō*], in the possession of Daishōji, shows that the occupant of Hōkyōji was from the Go-Sekke family of Takatsukasa.⁸³ In 1644, the daughter of emperor Go-mizunoo was Hōkyōji's abbess, and Hōkyōji remained an imperial *bikuni goshō* until the Meiji period. The transition in elite status from samurai (Ashikaga) to aristocratic (Takatsukasa) and then to imperial from the fifteenth century to the first half of the seventeenth century reflects in part the decline of the Ashikaga bakufu, but also the increased involvement of the imperial family in Buddhist convents. Hōkyōji's association with the Ashikaga family gave it a high enough status for a daughter of Takatsukasa Nobufusa 鷹司信房 (1565-1657) to become abbess Rikō (里光) in 1605.⁸⁴ Oka posits that the presence of a member of the court official's family, in turn, gave Hōkyōji the necessary status to welcome an

⁸⁰ Oka, "Kinsei no bikuni goshō (jō)," 31.

⁸¹ The *Bikuni goshō shutsuji nado kakiage hikae* lists the following *bikuni goshō* in 1634 with current abbesses and their maternal background: Daishōji, Kōshōin, Sanjichionji, Donkein, Hōkyōji, Daijiin, Keikōin 繼孝院, Yōrin'in 養林院, Zenchiin, Jijuin, Hōjiin, Eshōin 惠聖院, and Hokkeji. In 1715, *bikuni goshō* included Daishōji, Hōkyōji, Rinkyūji, Reikanji, Donkein, Jijuin, Kōshōin, Sanjichionji, Enshōji, Chūgūji, Hokkeji, and Zuiryūji according to the *Kyoto onyakusho muke daigai oboegaki* 京都御役所向大概覚書 [A general memorandum for Kyoto officials], a document at Daishōji. See Oka, "Kinsei no bikuni goshō (ge)," 15-17.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸⁴ *Seizan rakuenki narabi rekidai*, 15.

imperial princess, more so because Rikō's sister was the shogun's principal consort.⁸⁵ With the higher elite status of Hōkyōji's abbesses came an institutional elevation in ranking among *bikuni gosho*. This rank was confirmed by the joint role Hōkyōji abbesses took as head of Keiaiji, the highest ranked *ama gozan* 尼五山 (literally “Five Mountains” for nuns) convent, after it burned to the ground during the Ōnin War (1467-1477). While all convents received palace names when they were established, certain temples were additionally granted special *bikuni gosho* status by the court. In 1764, Hōkyōji received the official title, *Dodo gosho* 百々御所, the palace name it took when it moved to the Nishijin district of Kyoto.⁸⁶ The reason for the official renaming was a short period from 1764 to 1825 when Hōkyōji did not have an abbess in residence. Granting the palace name, *Dodo gosho*, ensured its high status as a suitable residence for imperial princesses. The designation was important because it recognized the existence of the convent in the absence of an abbess in residence.⁸⁷ Five convents received the official title of “*bikuni gosho*” during the late Edo period as a means to recognize their high status among imperial convents.⁸⁸

While women of elite social status have lived at Hōkyōji since its founding in the fourteenth century, the distinction between *bikuni gosho* and *ama monzeki* suggests subtle differences in its role as an institution for imperial and noble nuns. The term *bikuni gosho*, or nun's palace, which was mainly used in the pre- and early modern periods, suggests the buildings were primarily a residence for nuns, with “*gosho*” highlighting the elite class to which they belonged. Oka's claim that the term was originally connected to individuals, not

⁸⁵ Ibid., 20. The sister was Kyōko 孝子 (1602-1674), consort of the third Tokugawa shogun, Iemitsu 徳川家光 (1604-1651).

⁸⁶ Arakawa Reiko, “Bikuni gosho ni okeru gosho gō chokushi no igi” [On the meaning of granting the special title onto some ‘bikuni gosho’], *Shoryōbu kiyō* 38 (1986): 20.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ The five convents were (in chronological order): Hōkyōji (*Dodo gosho*) in 1764, Daishōji (*Ontera gosho* 御寺御所) in 1769, Kōshōin (*Tokiwa gosho* 常磐御所) in 1789, Rinkyūji (*Otowa gosho* 音羽御所) in 1797, and Donkein (*Take gosho* 竹御所) in 1807. While other convents—notably Chūgūji, Enshōji, and Reikanji—had *bikuni gosho* names, they were not granted official *bikuni gosho* status. These convents were established by imperial princesses, but by the eighteenth century their respective abbesses were members of the aristocracy, not daughters of the emperor. Arakawa claims the change in status from imperial to aristocratic warranted the separation of rank within the *miya monzeki* grouping; hence the added status of *bikuni gosho* names to only those convents which may welcome an imperial princess as abbess. See *ibid.*, 18-31.

buildings, stresses the personal nature of the phrase. In other words, the emphasis is on the women and the female/family lineages that make up the history of Hōkyōji. The individual is never far removed from the site; without the imperial or noble woman, the institution might change or end.

Calling Hōkyōji an *ama monzeki*, however, following present-day convention, shifts the emphasis of the convent to the religious lineage. “*Monzeki*,” a term applied to nuns and priests from the imperial or an aristocratic family, is inseparable from a religious association, whereas “*goshō*” can also be used for non-religious buildings and people. The convent is thus placed within a long history of *monzeki* temples, some of which wielded high-profile cultural and social status from the medieval period through the early modern period. As part of this system of religious institutions, Hōkyōji shares in this cultural history by association. Although the nuances in meaning are subtle – both names effectively convey the meaning of “imperial” and “nuns” – the differences are distinct and important to keep in mind.

Convent Diaries: A Glimpse at the Daily Lives of Princess Nuns

Diaries and documents remaining in convent collections give insight into family relations and daily activities, but more importantly, open a window onto women’s authority, social connections, and historical background. Nishiguchi Junko, conducting a survey of documents at Hōkyōji, found that the earliest extant diary dates to 1651, although most date from after the Kanbun era (1661-1673) through the Meiji (1868-1912) and Taishō periods (1912-1926). The Edo-period writings kept at Hōkyōji offer information about temple administration, such as entrance ceremonies, the right to wear purple robes, and yearly events, as well as snippets of daily life, such as menus, details of clothing, needs for yearly festivals, lists of gifts exchanged, and letters from other places.⁸⁹

An excerpt from Hōkyōji’s convent diary written during the tenure of Richū 里忠 (1641-1689; at Hōkyōji from 1656 to 1689) from the first month of the third year of Manji 万治 (1660) shows the close relationship the abbess retained with her mother and outlines some of the New Year visits, rituals, and gift exchanges that took place at the convent that year.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Nishiguchi Junko, “Kinsei no Hōkyōji no miya: Jōshōmyō’in no miya Itsugon Richō no nyūji to tokudō o megutte” [An abbess at Hōkyōji in the early modern period: the entrance into the convent and tonsure of Jōshōmyō’in no miya Itsugon Richō], in *Nihon bukkyō no shiteki tenkai*, ed. Sonoda Kōyū (Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 1999), 521.

⁹⁰ The diaries remain in the archives at Hōkyōji. Richū was the daughter of Go-mizunoo and Hōshunmon’in Takako 逢春門院隆子 (1604-1685). The Hōkyōji diary from which I have

The daily entries are succinct, with a brief note on the weather and then the days' events. On the first day, the abbess (Hōkyōji no miya 宝鏡寺宮) performed annual rituals, then entertained some visitors, Kurōemon of the Left Watch of the Right Palace Guards (Ukon Sahyōe Kurōemon 右近左兵衛九郎衛門) and Denhyōe of the Right Gate Guards of the Eastern Capital (Sakyō Uemon Denhyōe 左京右衛門田兵衛). On the second day she went to pay New Year's respects to the retired emperor Go-mizunoo 後水尾院 (1596-1680; r. 1611-1629), his principal consort, Tōfukumon'in 東福門院 (1607-1678), and the abbess' sister, Princess Mitsuko (a.k.a. Teruko) 光子内親王 (1634-1727).⁹¹ The fact that she waited until the second day of the New Year's holiday to visit her father suggests that, as the head of Hōkyōji, her duty was first to her convent. On the third day, visitors included the abbess from Reikanji.⁹² Richū's mother sent New Year gifts of horse chestnut rice cakes, sticks of candy from Katsura, chestnuts, and mandarin oranges on the fourth and the fifth days; for the remainder of the month they had almost daily correspondence as Richū inquired about her mother's health, as she was unwell.

The exchange of visits to Hōkyōji and the imperial palace underscores the close familial alliances between court and convent. Although most women in *bikuni goshō* entered at very young ages, they still retained relationships with their birth mothers and, to varying degrees, their birth fathers.

translated this excerpt is partially transcribed in Inokuchi, *Nimonzeki no gengo seikatsu no kenkyū*, 421-432.

⁹¹ Mitsuko was Richū's full sister, as they shared the same father, Go-mizunoo, and mother, Hōshunmon'in. Mitsuko became a nun at the advanced age of forty-seven in 1680, following the death of her father, Go-mizunoo, and two years later founded Rinkyūji on the grounds of Shūgakuin, the retired emperor's palace. She was an accomplished painter whose works still remain in Kyoto area convents and temples. For more information about Mitsuko and her artistic production, see Patricia Fister, "From Sacred Leaves to Sacred Images: The Buddhist Nun Gen'yō's Practice of Making and Distributing Miniature Kannon," in *Figures and Places of the Sacred. International Symposium no. 18*, ed. Yoritomi Motohiro (Kyoto: Kokusai Nihon Bunka Kenkyū Sentā, 2003), 75-98; idem, *Amamonzeki to nisō no bijutsu* (New York: Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies, 2003); and Kaburagi Yūko, "Mitsuko Naishinnō no sakuhi ni tsuite: Rinkyūji zō kakebana zu byōbu o chūshin ni" [A work of art by Princess Mitsuko: A folding screen of standing flowers at Rinkyūji], *Bijutsushi kenkyū* 20 (March 1983): 57-79.

⁹² Sōchō 宗澄 (Tari no Miya 谷宮 (1639-1678). Sōchō was a half-sister to Richū. Her mother was Kyōgoku tsubone 京極局 (Sono Mitsuko 園光子). She entered Reikanji in 1655.

The Imperial Family and Imperial Buddhist Convents

By the early Edo period, the proliferation of imperial and noble offspring needing office led to a rise in the number of *bikuni gosho* designated for daughters of the emperor and aristocracy. Takie Sugiyama Lebra, writing on the nineteenth century aristocracy, goes so far as to state that “the priest-supplying families, both imperial and noble, used these temples as a dumping ground for their unwanted sons and daughters.”⁹³ While the reasons for having children enter temples and convents are more complex than Lebra suggests, it is true that the early Edo period was notable for the revival and expansion of the *monzeki* temples and convent network. When a child was placed in a convent, the imperial or noble family made donations to the convent or paid for restoration, thus raising the social and financial status of the convent.⁹⁴ In this way, the *monzeki* occupant and convent were mutually beneficial for creating and maintaining an elite position in Kyoto society; the imperial connections elevated the standing of the convent, while the prominent position of the convent made it suitable for imperial women to live there. The religious role of the convent cannot be underestimated either. Having a daughter or widow in a convent meant she could pray for the longevity of the family line and perform memorial rituals for their ancestors, a principal function of the convents.⁹⁵ *Monzeki* convents and temples, therefore, became important sites of imperial and aristocratic culture and authority.

In the beginning of the Edo period, the number of convents for imperial women rose as Emperors Go-yōzei 後陽成天皇 (1572-1617; r. 1586-1611) and Go-mizunoo took an active interest in revitalizing them.⁹⁶ From the inception of Hōkyōji in the mid-fourteenth century to

⁹³ Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *Above the Clouds Status Culture of the Modern Japanese Nobility* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 48.

⁹⁴ Yunoue Takashi, “Ashikaga shi no joseitachi to amadera” [Women of the Ashikaga and convents], in *Kodai chūseishi ronshū*, ed. Kyūshū Daigaku Kokushigaku Kenkyū Shitsu (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1990), 505.

⁹⁵ Yunoue, “Ashikaga shi no joseitachi,” 505; Nishiguchi Junko, “Josei to mōja kijutsu kuyō” [Women and memorial services], in *Hotoke to onna*, ed. Nishiguchi Junko (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1997), 228-231.

⁹⁶ The number of convents in general started to rise from the thirteenth century. Women entered convents for myriad reasons during the medieval period. The war at the beginning of the Kamakura period (1185-1333) led to an increase of widows, and the financial situation worsened for many women as families were thrown into upheaval. Women may have entered convents in order to stay faithful to their deceased husbands. Unmarried women might have been forced to enter convents when they became superfluous at home or court. Women may

Emperor Ōgimachi 正親町天皇 (r. 1557-1586), an average of two imperial daughters entered *bikuni gosho*. Go-yōzei, on the other hand, had six daughters who entered *bikuni gosho*. Go-mizunoo saw eight daughters become nuns, one of whom was Richū, the author of the diary excerpted above. Go-mizunoo's successor, Go-sai 後西天皇 (1637-1685; r. 1655-1663), also had eight daughters become nuns, and Reigen 靈元天皇 (1654-1735; r. 1663-1687), the following emperor and Go-sai's brother, had seven daughters in *bikuni gosho*.⁹⁷ In all, five generations of imperial princesses served as abbess of Hōkyōji from 1644 to 1842.

The high number of offspring was most likely not the sole factor in the increase of *monzeki* temples and *bikuni gosho*. Strong religious devotion, attempt to increase sociopolitical or economic power through the placement of offspring in temples, interest in cultural pursuits and a place in which to pursue them, and extending the range of the imperial family throughout the capital may also have played a part. Also, the wish to have children pray for family ancestors and the well-being of the family was an important factor. Despite the expansion of the *monzeki* system in the sixteen and seventeenth centuries, by the nineteenth century, it was on the decline. Imperial women continued to enter *bikuni gosho* until the end of the Edo period, but their numbers decreased dramatically after Reigen.⁹⁸

The Codification of Bikuni Gosho in the Early Edo Period

During the reign of Emperor Go-mizunoo, the *bikuni gosho* system was codified, and convents were divided into *onmiya shitsu* 御宮室, for members of the imperial family, and *onzen shitsu* 御禪室, for members of the aristocracy.⁹⁹ The *onmiya shitsu* were Daishōji,

have also entered convents when their financial and social male protectors were lost. Tonomura Hitomi, "Re-envisioning Women in the Post-Kamakura Age," in *The Origins of Japan's Medieval World: Courtiers, Clerics, and Warriors in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Jeffrey P. Mass (Stanford University Press, 1997), 165-166. Although these convents often housed aristocratic women, they were different in scope from *bikuni gosho*, which were built or maintained for one imperial or noble abbess at a time and her attendants.

⁹⁷ Two daughters were adopted. Sonryō 尊梁 (1710-1731) entered Kōshōin. Her father was Kyōgoku no miya Ayahito shinnō 京極宮文仁親王 (1680-1711). Sōshin 宗真 (1714-1764) was an abbess at Reikanji. Her father was Fushimi no miya Kuninaga shinnō 伏見宮邦永親王 (1676-1726).

⁹⁸ Inokuchi, *Nimonzeki no gengo seikatsu no chōsa kenkyū*, 21.

⁹⁹ Takebe, "Amadera jiin no enkaku," 163. The decree for Hōkyōji to be designated as an *onmiya shitsu* is transcribed in "Ama gozan Keiaiji denkei Seizan Hōkyōji teidai keifu jiseki" in Inokuchi Yūichi, "(Dai san) Nimonzeki no gengo kankyō ni tsuite: Nimonzeki no gengo

Hōkyōji, Donkein, Kōshōin, Enshōji, Rinkyūji, Reikanji, and Chūgūji. Women entering these convents were either daughters of an emperor or ex-emperor, or had been adopted by one before entering a convent. Occupants of Hōkyōji from that time period included daughters of the emperors Go-mizunoo, Go-sai, Nakamikado (1701-1737; r. (1710)-1735), and Kōkaku (r. (1780)-1817).¹⁰⁰ Typically the women arrived at an imperial convent between the ages of five and eleven, although princesses who were in their teens or early twenties also entered, and they studied and lived there until their deaths.

Onzen shitsu included Zuiryūji, Hokkeji, Sanjichionji, Honkōin, Hōjiin, Jijuin, and Sōjiin (which merged with Jijuin in 1920). Women entering these convents came mainly from the five regent houses. In addition, certain families became associated with particular convents. For example, members of the Konoe family entered Hokkeji or Sanjichionji. Members of the Kujō family entered Zuiryūji, and members of the Hino family entered Hōjiin.¹⁰¹ As with the *onmiya shitsu*, women from other aristocratic families who entered these convents were first adopted by the respective families. By the end of the Edo period, as the number of imperial and aristocratic daughters declined, the number of convents without abbesses or who shared abbesses with other convents rose.¹⁰² The Meiji period may have definitively ended the *bikuni gosho* system as it returned imperial princesses to their families and renamed or reclassified convents, but the convents were already in the process of changing themselves.

For Hōkyōji, the dwindling number of imperial daughters resulted in a sixty-year absence of an abbess during the 1800s. After Emperor Kōkaku's daughter, Rikin, died in 1842, there was no abbess in attendance at Hōkyōji until 1868, when Shūkin 周鈞, the abbess of Keikōin Shūgetsudō 繼孝院主月堂, a branch temple of Hōkyōji, started to look after it. In 1871, after imperial abbesses were secularized as the government restructured and renamed

seikatsu no chōsa kenkyū (II)" [Part three: regarding the language environment at imperial Buddhist convents. Research on the speech of aristocratic women in imperial Buddhist convents, part two], *Kyōto furitsu Saikyō daigaku gakujutsu hōkoku* (1961): 55.

¹⁰⁰ Go-mizunoo's daughters were Senjuin no miya Kugon zenni chōrō 仙寿院宮久嚴禪尼長老, also known as Rishō 理昌 (1631-1656) and Kōtokuin no miya Gizan Richū chōrō 高德院宮義山理忠尼長老, known as Richū 理忠 (1641-1689). Go-sai's daughter was Hongakuin no miya dokugon Rihōni 本覺院宮德嚴理豐尼, or Rihō 理豐 (1672-1745). Nakamikado's daughter was Jōshōmyōin no miya Itsugon Richōni 淨照明院宮逸嚴理長尼. She was known as Richō 理長 or Rishū 理秀 (1726-1764). Kōkaku's daughter was Sanmajiin no miya Reigon Rikinni Dai Zenshi 三摩地院宮靈嚴理欽尼大禪師, or Rikin 里欽 (1824-1842).

¹⁰¹ Takebe, "Amadera jiin no enkaku," 163.

¹⁰² Inokuchi, "Dai san: Nimonzeki no gengo kankyō ni tsuite," 21.

imperial convents, Hōkyōji was placed under the jurisdiction of Shōkokuji. When the previous *bikuni gosho* were allowed to reinstate their abbesses in 1873, however, Shūkin became the abbess of Hōkyōji.¹⁰³

Gift-Giving as a Symbol of Authority and Independence

Hōkyōji's diary is a revealing record of daily activity at the convent, and an excerpt from the first month of 1660 outlines an especially active time of visits and gift-giving. Through the recording of incoming and outgoing gifts, the diary seemed to function, in this way, as a register of social activity to ensure proper gift-giving protocol. The diary does not go into detail about what constituted every gift (one suspects only important gifts are noted), yet care is given to record who gave and what was given in return. An entry from the eleventh day of the first month reads in part:

A New Year's present was sent to Princess Akiko [Meishi]¹⁰⁴ and the other princesses. Hōkyōji no miya's wet nurse sent New Year's presents to Dewa, the emperor's wet nurse, and to Maruo the head of the laws and justice. Hōkyōji no miya's mother sent *hishio* 醬 [a type of miso] and gold dust. Miki gave a donation. Hōkyōji no miya sent a return gift to Otatsu from the western part of the capital. Her wet nurse cut the mirror-shaped *mochi* (*kagamibiraki* 鏡開き)¹⁰⁵ at the convent. [...] The abbess of Keiri'in sent a donation. A return gift was sent to Kashiwa.

On the thirteenth day a return gift from Princess Akiko is recorded.

This is followed on the fourteenth day by an entry:

Today the abbess bathed (*ongyōzui* 御行水). A return gift was sent to Keiri'in. A return gift was sent to Shōkei temple. A donation was sent, as usual, to the Sado

¹⁰³ *Seizan ryakuenki narabi rekidai*, n.d.

¹⁰⁴ Akiko joō 明子女王 (1638-1680) was chief consort of Emperor Go-sai (Richū's brother). She was the daughter of Takamatsu no miya Yoshihito shinnō 高松宮好仁親王. Her mother was Hōshuin Yasuko 宝珠院寧子, the daughter of Matsudaira Tadanao 松平忠直.

¹⁰⁵ Kagamibiraki is an annual event that takes place on the eleventh (or the twentieth) day of the new year and marks the end of New Year festivities. For this event at the convent, a woman divided a piece of *mochi* (sticky rice cake) placed on a mirror stand and ate it. See, for example, Roy Hamilton, *The Art of Rice: Spirit and Sustenance in Asia* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 2003), 299.

official (*Sado no kami* 佐渡の守).¹⁰⁶ The messenger was Awachi.

A diary from Daishōji, a neighboring convent, is more detailed in its record-keeping of gifts, suggesting Hōkyōji's brevity was a stylistic choice, not convent diary-keeping convention.¹⁰⁷ Excerpts from the same year and month as the Hōkyōji's diary, however, similarly reveal with whom the nuns kept company and how they spent their days during the busy New Year's holiday:

(Manji 3 (1660) First day, first month)

Daishōji no miya went to pay respects to Yōtokuin dono 陽徳院殿.¹⁰⁸ She gave Yōtokuin two *bu* [a unit of Japanese currency] as a New Year's present. She gave Sokin one *kaibariko* 貝張子,¹⁰⁹ and one *natsumebariko* 棗張子.¹¹⁰ She gave Kokawa dono 粉河殿 one ream of paper and one *imaori* obi. To Nagato dono 長門殿 she gave one set of [bowls or clothes or thread]. She gave Konnosho two pairs of quilted *azetabi* 畦足袋.¹¹¹ She gave the same to Shusei. She gave Oman an *imaori* obi.¹¹² Yōtokuin also gave a present to Daishōji no miya. She gave her two small boxes for papers as a

¹⁰⁶ This official was Makino Chikashige 牧野親成 (1607-1677), who also served as shogunal deputy (京都所司代 *Kyōto shoshidai*) to Tokugawa Iemitsu from 1654-1668. It is in this capacity that Makino visited Hōkyōji, most likely to collect taxes.

¹⁰⁷ Daishōji's diary, *Daishōji on'nikki* 大聖寺御日記, in the Daishōji archives, is intact from 1660 to the Meiji period, except for the years from 1663 (Kanbun 2) to 1691 (Genroku 3). The following excerpt was written during the tenure of the sixteenth abbess at Daishōji, Genshō 元昌 (1637-1662). Genshō's father was Go-mizunoo, her mother was Kyōgoku no tsubone 京極局 and her brother was Emperor Go-Kōmyō 御光明 (1633-1654). The excerpt here is transcribed in Inokuchi, *Nimonzeki no gengo seikatsu no chōsa kenkyū*, 445-455.

¹⁰⁸ The sixth daughter of Go-yōzei and the fifteenth (the previous) abbess of Daishōji, who was, at the time, in recluse at Rengeishōjōji 蓮華胃清浄寺 in Saga.

¹⁰⁹ A child's toy made of a bell placed inside clamshells, with decals on top

¹¹⁰ A toy made with decals pasted on paper cut in the shape of a jujube.

¹¹¹ Sock-like foot coverings in the *aze* style (*azeori* 畦織) of weaving with two different thicknesses of thread. The resulting ridged patterning on the surface of the fabric, which resembles the raised walkways between rice fields (*aze* 畦), gives the style its name.

¹¹² Inokuchi speculates that Sokin was a chief attendant to Yōtokuin, and Kokawa, Nagato, Konnosho, Shusei and Oman were women in service to Yōtokuin. Inokuchi, *Nimonzeki no gengo seikatsu no chōsa*, 453.

New Year's present. Kyoki (a woman in service at court) gave Daishōji no miya *konbu* [kelp].

(The second day)

Daishōji no miya went to pay respects to retired emperor Go-mizunoo at the *seno gosho*.¹¹³ She gave him five bundles of the finest konbu as a New Year's gift. She gave Tōfukumon'in ten reams of Sugihara paper and three *sage* 提帶 obi.¹¹⁴ She had twenty tea bowls [*chawan*] sent to Shinchūnagon,¹¹⁵ ten bowls sent to Shinsho,¹¹⁶ and twenty bowls sent to Emon no suke 衛門典侍.¹¹⁷ After returning home, Kadenokōji 勘解小路 visited.¹¹⁸ He was given sake. Izumi dono came and gave twenty bowls. Sho Ichijō visited and gave ten bowls. Echizendono also came and gave fifty bundles of *mizuhiki* 水引 (ceremonial paper cards).

(The third day)

Daishōji no miya went to pay her respects to Yura no miya 玲瓏宮.¹¹⁹ As a New Year's gift she gave a box of *kaya* fruit,¹²⁰ and the wet nurse gave crystal sugar.

As seen in this excerpt, the New Year's holiday at Daishōji follows similar conventions as that of Hōkyōji. Gift exchanges and visits are prominent in entries for the first few days, highlighting the role of the abbess as leader of a convent. The exchanges of presents outlined above show a hierarchy of value assigned to objects which reveal, in part, the relative social status and relationships between the abbess of Daishōji and her acquaintances. Daily use items (eating bowls) were given to servants and those in domestic employ. Higher-ranking presents included Sugihara paper and bundles of konbu. In the order of visits made by the abbess, her

¹¹³ Go-mizunoo was Daishōji no miya's father. She visited him the same day as Richū.

¹¹⁴ An obi worn by court women from the Muromachi period. Embroidered with gold thread, it tied in the front.

¹¹⁵ Shinkōgimon'in 新広義門院 (1624-1677).

¹¹⁶ A court lady

¹¹⁷ A high-ranking court lady

¹¹⁸ Kadenokōji Suketada 勘解由小路資忠 (1632-1679)

¹¹⁹ Yura no miya was Daishōji no miya's half-brother, known as Sonshō hoshinnō 尊証法親王 after he took Buddhist vows. He was the fifth son of Go-mizunoo, and his mother was Shinkōgimon'in. He was a priest at Shōren'in 青蓮院, a monzeki temple.

¹²⁰ A type of yew.

allegiances and associations are made clear. Daishōji no miya's first New Year's visit was to her predecessor, the fifteenth abbess of Daishōji. On the second day she visited her father and his main consort, Tōfukumon'in. On the third day she visited her half-brother, a priest at a *monzeki* temple.

Indeed, the authority of abbesses as the leader of their convents can be seen in the economics of gift-exchange and New Year's visits. While the institution of Hōkyōji gained prominence through individual nuns, who through their family affiliations belonged to a culturally or politically powerful segment of society, it also retained its own authority through economic and religious independence. The main reason for the longevity of individual imperial Buddhist convents is because they have been historically, and remain today, semi-independently functioning economic entities.¹²¹ This is not to say *bikuni gosho* did not rely on monies donated by a princess' family or the bakufu. The *bikuni gosho* were financially supported by both, as well as by parishioners for whom they prayed for deceased loved ones. A critical factor in the continuity of a convent was the ability to repair its buildings; donors or patrons were necessary to provide funding for physical maintenance.¹²²

An important source of income came through convent-owned land, which was guaranteed in *shuinjō* (red-seal letters) given by the shogunate.¹²³ To control their holdings, the convents had (male) administrators to run convent business and *banshū* 番衆, male guards also

¹²¹ In this way they function like other convents erected for women in the medieval period, which were founded for war widows. Ushiyama Yoshiyuki outlines the creation of these convents, specifically Zenmyōji in Yamashiro Province, Enjōji in Izu Province, and Shin'on'in in Miura Province, as institutions that offered economic support to those women who had lost it. He goes on to show how the convents' main function at this time was to give support to individual women (in families or in other social groups) rather than as organized centers for religious activity. Proof of this is the conversion into temples or dissolution after the passing of a particular abbess. (In other words, the convent is known as such only when a woman is the abbess). See Ushiyama, "Buddhist Convents in Medieval Japan," 132-136.

¹²² Oishi, "Bikuni gosho to Muromachi bakufu," 17.

¹²³ Enshōji, for example, was established on 54,000 *tsubo* (almost 200 square kilometers) of land in Yamamura, which was ratified in a red-seal document (*shuinjō* 朱印状) by the shogun, Ietsuna (家綱) in the ninth month of Kanbun 7 (1667). This land was designated for the convent buildings, convent fields, and common land for the residents. *Enshōji monjo* [Historical documents of Enshōji], vol. 3, 14-15, cited in Cogan, "Precepts and Power," 81. See also Oka, "Bikuni gosho" (ge), 17. Hōkyōji received its *shuinjō* on the seventh day of the ninth month of Genna 3 (1618).

employed at the emperor and shogun palaces.¹²⁴ Convent documents show an increase in administrative and financial records during the mid-eighteenth century as Hōkyōji developed its network of branch temples and farming yields.¹²⁵ During the Meiji period, maintenance stipends and financial gifts from the imperial family helped to finance Hōkyōji's daily operation, as seen in three donations given to Hōkyōji during this time: Meiji 3 (1871) to repair the *chokusakudō's* Amida statue; an annual maintenance stipend starting in Meiji 9 (1877), and a special donation by the current empress in Meiji 23 (1891).¹²⁶

Economic viability for a convent went hand-in-hand with the religious authority individual nuns attained. While authority was granted through their roles as religious leaders of a convent and as members of the Kyoto elite, autonomy was leveraged partly through their status as nuns. The independence of nuns from social expectations for women in a strictly organized medieval Japanese society has been addressed by twentieth-century scholars. Amino Yoshihiko argues in *Muen, kugai, raku: Nihon chūsei no jiyū to heiwa* [Unattached, the realm of temples, paradise: freedoms and peace in medieval Japan], that women in convents were not beholden to the same rules and relationships found in society at large.¹²⁷ Barbara Ruch also explores this concept when she writes, "In offering religiosecular severance (and liberation) from the requirements (and impositions) from society, the tonsure proved to be one of the most creative forces in Japanese history."¹²⁸

Inherent in the statements above is the notion that the degendering of women was partly responsible for the release from social conventions. Frances Wilson summarizes that the role of nuns has been accepted with ambivalence in much of Buddhist cultures because it denies the natural role of women as mothers and wives.¹²⁹ It is for this same reason, however, that

¹²⁴ Fukutō Sanae, *Rekishi no naka no kōjotachi* [Imperial women in history] (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 2002), 169.

¹²⁵ Ohki Sadako, "Report on the August 28-30, 1997 Dodo gosho Survey," *IMJS Reports* 8, no. 1 (December, 1997).

¹²⁶ Sanō, *Kōshitsu to jūin*, 289.

¹²⁷ Amino Yoshihiko, *Muen, kugai, raku: Nihon chūsei no jiyū to heiwa* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1987), 204.

¹²⁸ Barbara Ruch, "The Other Side of Culture," in *Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 3: *Medieval Japan*, ed. Yamamura Kōzō (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 507.

¹²⁹ Frances Wilson in Diana Paul, *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in Mahāyāna Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 78.

women who are nuns are given a sense of power because they are not limited to the roles prescribed by their sex.

Wilson develops this view further: “The implication is that the nun, as well as the prostitute with whom she is sometimes associated, are in incongruous roles, in roles disassociated from family life.”¹³⁰ The liberation of women from biological expectations was key to opening new possibilities for personal growth and social acceptance. With this “freedom” from expected social roles, nuns were able to forge independent directions of leadership and personal power.

Personal Relationships and Power through Association

Although given religious authority and power, abbesses retained their natal family connections. In the Hōkyōji diary from 1660, personal news filtered through daily duties at the convent. From the month’s entries we see that the abbess’ mother was ill, although her exact condition was not recorded. From the twenty-second day her condition seemed to worsen, as seen in the following entries:

(twenty-second day)

Hōkyōji no miya sent a letter inquiring about her mother’s health, as her mother is ill. After eating, Hōkyōji no miya paid a sick call to her mother.

(twenty-third day)

Kyūsaburō went to see the Atago Gongen 愛宕権現 in place of Hōkyōji no miya.¹³¹ Hachirōemon was sent to pay a sick call on Hōkyōji no miya’s mother [...] Ise Tsukawa gave a box of Suzuki *wakame* and the annual tribute of a sack of rice. Ofuku visited. Hachiemon was sent to pay a sick call on Hōkyōji no miya’s mother.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 79.

¹³¹ The Atago Gongen, an indigenous Shugendō deity, is a god that protects against fire and war who lives on Mt. Atago, northwest of Kyoto. He is often depicted in triptychs as an avatar of Jizō, carrying a ringed staff and a desire-cancelling jewel, flanking Kannon on a white horse opposite Bishamon on the other side. He is therefore also known as Shōgun Jizō in his Buddhist form. Michael Ashkenazi, *Handbook of Japanese Mythology* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 122. See Anne-Marie Bouchy, “The Cult of Mount Atago and the Atago Confraternities,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 2 (May, 1987): 255-277 for information about Atago Gongen worship.

(twenty-fourth day)

A person was sent to pay a sick call on Hōkyōji no miya's mother. In return she sent back scented water (香水 *kōsui*), offerings, and an amulet from Iwashimizu Hachimangū.¹³² [...] Hōkyōji no miya's wet nurse paid a sick call to Hōkyōji no miya's mother and brought *sekihan* [sticky rice with red beans] and another dish.

(twenty-fifth day)

Hōkyōji no miya paid a sick call to her mother [...] Someone [from the convent] was sent for as it became dark when [Hōkyōji no miya] was to return. Her wet nurse went to bring her home.

(twenty-sixth day)

Hōkyōji no miya sent inquiry about her mother's health. After eating, she sent her wet nurse to pay a sick call on her mother. Hōkyōji no miya visited Keikōin dono.¹³³ She ate dinner there.

For the remainder of the month, the diary notes that Hōkyōji no miya made daily inquiries about her mother's health and sent someone to her residence or visited herself.

The large size of imperial families during the first 150 years of the Edo period meant greater familial networks among tenants of *monzeki* temples, convents, and the palace. Siblings were bound by an emperor father, and strong relationships are also seen among brothers and sisters with the same biological mother. A perhaps extreme example of this is seen in the offspring of Hōshunmon'in (1604-1685), who had ten children with Go-mizunoo between 1631 and 1647.¹³⁴ Of these, the fourth son, (Go-mizunoo's seventh son), born in 1638, became the emperor Go-sai, and the third daughter (Go-mizunoo's eighth daughter), Princess Mitsuko 光子内親王 (1634-1727), also known by her Buddhist name Shōzan Gen'yō 照山元瑤, founded the convent Rinkyūji 林丘寺. Two other daughters entered *bikuni gosho*, two sons

¹³² Iwashimizu Hachimangū 石清水八幡宮 is a shrine built on the peak of Mt. Otoko in present-day Yawata City, in the southwest of Kyoto prefecture. It has been connected to the imperial family since its inception in 859, when it was built upon orders by Emperor Seiwa 850-880 for the protection of the imperial family and the capital of Heian by Hachiman.

¹³³ The abbess of Keikōin, a branch temple of Hōkyōji.

¹³⁴ Hōshunmon'in, the name by which she is known today, is her Buddhist name. Her name at birth was Fujiwara (Kushige) no Takako 藤原 (櫛笥) 隆子. She was the daughter of Minister of the Left, first rank, Kushige Takamasa 従一位左大臣櫛笥隆致.

entered *monzeki* temples, and one son stayed at court as a prince.¹³⁵ The family connections between children thus spanned temple, convent, and court.

Despite being separated at a young age and brought up in different locations, there is evidence that family relationships were maintained throughout the lives of imperial children. A modern inventory of original documents at Hōkyōji shows that at least thirteen letters were sent to Richō, the twenty-third abbess of the convent, from her brother, Kōjun hōshinnō 公遵法親王 (1722-1788), the abbot of Rinnōji 輪王寺.¹³⁶ They were both children of Emperor Nakamikado and Lady-in-Waiting Shimizutani no Iwako 清水谷石子 (1703-1735).¹³⁷ Some letters are undated; others are dated between 1748 and 1750. Other notable correspondence is between Richō and Shōsan 聖珊 (1721-1759), the abbess of Donkein, and between Richō and

¹³⁵ Three children died in childhood. The complete list of Hōshunmon'in's children in chronological birth order is as follows:

Rishō joō 里昌女王 (Yaenomiya 八重宮) (1631-1656), the twentieth abbess of Hōkyōji

Reishōin 靈昭院 (died early)

Gen'yō 元瑤 (Akenomiya 朱宮; Mitsuko naishinnō 光子内新王); (1634-1727), the founder of Rinkyūji

Go-sai 御西 (Nagahito shinnō 良仁新王, Hidenomiya 秀宮) (1637-1685), 111th Emperor (r. (1656)-1663)

Seishin hōshinnō 性真法新王 (Chikaatsu shinnō 眞敦親王, Yudanomiya 由田宮) (1639-1696), entered Daikakuji 大覺寺

Masa no miya 摩佐宮 (died early)

Richū joō 里忠女王 (Kaenomiya 香枝宮) (1641-1689), the twenty-first abbess of Hōkyōji

Yasuhito shinnō 穩仁新王 (八条宮) (1643-1665), third generation head of Hachijō no miya (Katsura no miya 桂宮) princely family

Eikōin 永光院 (died early)

Dōkan hōshinnō 道寛法新王 (聡宮) 1647-1676, entered Shōgoin

¹³⁶ Kyōtofu Kyōiku Inkai, *Kyōtofu komonjo nado kinkyū chōsa hōkokusho: Ama monzeki jūin Daishōji, Hōkyōji, Reikanji komonjo mokuroku* [Report on the urgent survey of archival documents in Kyoto Prefecture: an inventory of archival documents of imperial Buddhist convents Daishōji, Hōkyōji, and Reikanji] (Kyoto: Nakamura Insatsu, 1985), 55-62.

¹³⁷ Kōjun was the second son of Emperor Nakamikado; Richō was the fourth daughter.

Eika 永果 (1732-1808), the abbess of Daishōji.¹³⁸ Both of these abbesses were half-sisters to Richō.¹³⁹

Hōkyōji's Historical Affiliations with the Ashikaga, Daijiiin, and Keiaji

As seen in the diary excerpt, the familial lineage of its occupants was woven with Hōkyōji's religious lineage. Although leaders of their own convents, abbesses during the Edo period retained personal relationships with immediate members of the imperial family, which, in turn, gave the convent high prestige. Hōkyōji's prominence, however, began before its connection with the imperial family. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Hōkyōji was associated mainly with the Ashikaga bakufu. As previously mentioned, it was this relationship that helped the convent attain its high rank among the Kyoto *bikuni gosho*, which has lasted until the present day.

The first known Ashikaga woman to enter Hōkyōji was Katsurabayashi Eshōni 桂林惠昌尼 (d. 1422), a daughter of Yoshiakira 義詮 (1358-1408) and sister of Yoshimitsu 足利義満 (1358-1408). After Eshōni, Ashikaga women took the tonsure at Daijiiin, Sanjichionji, Hōkyōji, and Donkein.¹⁴⁰ At Hōkyōji, in addition to Eshōni, four daughters of the Ashikaga shoguns Yoshimitsu, Yoshinori, and Yoshimasa lived at Hōkyōji throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁴¹ Other Ashikaga women who lived at Hōkyōji included a daughter of Yoshinori's son, Masatomo 政知, and a daughter adopted by Yoshiharu, whose monastic name was Rigen 理源.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Eika was also known as Eikō, written with the characters 永皎 or 永晃.

¹³⁹ Shōsan's mother was the daughter of Komori Yorisue 小森頼季. Eika's mother was Kuze Natsuko 久世夏子.

¹⁴⁰ Daijiiin had the highest number of Ashikaga women, followed by Sanjichionji, Hōkyōji, and Donkein. Other convents with Ashikaga women include Sesshuin 撰取院, Kōshōin 光照院, Hōkkeji 法華寺, Shinjōji 真乗寺, Tsūgenji 通玄寺, Anzenji 安禅寺, Sōjiin 惣持院, Jijūin 慈受院, and Daishōji 大聖寺. Yunoue, "Ashikaga shi no joseitachi," 510.

¹⁴¹ Yoshimitsu's daughter was Rikyū 理久 (d. 1455). The name of one daughter of Yoshinori (1433-1496) is unknown; the other is Riei 理永 (dates unknown). Yoshimasa's daughter was Rishō 理勝 (1464-1487).

¹⁴² While the name of Masatomo's daughter is unknown, it is recorded that she died in 1509. Rigen's dates are unknown. Her birth father was Konoe Hisamichi 近衛尚道 (1472-1544), an imperial prince and regent during the Warring States period 戦国時代 (1493-1573). Yunoue, "Ashikaga shi no joseitachi," 507-509.

Because of the close relationships between Daijiin and the Ashikaga family and between Daijiin and Hōkyōji, it is worth discussing briefly the history of Daijiin. Daijiin was a branch temple of Hōkyōji during the early modern period.¹⁴³ Originally, however, they were independent convents.¹⁴⁴ When Hōkyōji moved to the Nishijin area, it was built next to Daijiin. While the exact date when it was constructed is unknown, Daijiin was founded by Sūkenmon'in 崇賢門院 (1339-1427), so its origin can be placed toward the end of the fourteenth or early fifteenth century.¹⁴⁵ The first Ashikaga woman to enter Daijiin, Seikyū 聖久 (1396-1434), became the second abbess; after she rose to the position, she was also called Minami gosho 南御所 or Daijiin dono 大慈院殿. Seikyū was the daughter of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and Neifukuin dono 寧福院殿; she was taken in by Sūkenmon'in in 1402 to be trained as her successor at Daijiin.

Hino Tomiko was closely affiliated with Daijiin. Tomiko's daughter, Keizan 溪山, served concurrently as the seventh abbess of Daijiin and the fifteenth abbess of Hōkyōji. She also became abbess at Keiaiji. Not much is known about her; she was born in 1462, took the tonsure in 1476, and died in 1505 at the age of 44.¹⁴⁶ Tomiko also sent two adopted daughters to Daijiin: the daughter of Ichijō Kaneyoshi 一条兼良 and the daughter of Emperor Go-tsuchimikado 後土御門天皇.¹⁴⁷ The *Hōkyōji chū Daijiin denkei ryakki* [An abridged history of Daijiin, on the grounds of Hōkyōji] (1873), in the possession of Hōkyōji, lists Hino Tomiko as the sixth abbess of Daijiin, although it is unclear if she resided at the convent and, if so, the duration of her stay.¹⁴⁸ The close family connections to Daijiin fostered by Tomiko is reflected in the fact that after Tomiko died, the convent held the first year memorial service on her behalf.¹⁴⁹ A small wood statue of Tomiko is also displayed on the altar in the *chokusakudō* at Hōkyōji, a reminder of her personal connection to that temple through the joint abbacy of her

¹⁴³ Hōkyōji had five branch temples. In addition to Daijiin, the other convents were Keikōin 継孝院, Yōrin'an 養林庵, Eshōin 惠聖院, and Zuike'in 瑞花院. *Shūkyō seido chōsa shiryō*, 7:52. Hōjiin 宝慈院 is also listed as a branch temple in *Kyō habutae* (1685). In *Shinshū Kyōto sōsho*, 2:168.

¹⁴⁴ Yunoue, "Ashikaga shi no joseitachi to amadera," 517.

¹⁴⁵ Sūkenmon'in was Yoshimitsu's maternal aunt by birth; thus, she had a close family connection to the Ashikaga. *Ibid.*, 517-518.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 518-519.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 519. Kaneyoshi is also pronounced Kanera.

¹⁴⁸ *Hōkyōji chū Daijiin denkei ryakki* (1873); and Yunoue, "Ashikaga shi no joseitachi," 519.

¹⁴⁹ Yunoue, "Ashikaga shi no joseitachi," 519.

daughters Keizan and Rishō, as well as the relationship between Hōkyōji and Daijiiin. (Fig. 1.2) Most likely, the statue was moved from Daijiiin to Hōkyōji after the former was demolished.¹⁵⁰

In addition to Keizan, two other abbesses of Daijiiin served jointly as abbesses of Hōkyōji. The ninth abbess of Daijiiin, Riei 理栄, the daughter of Ashikaga Yoshitane 足利 義種 (1466-1523), served as the sixteenth abbess of Hōkyōji.¹⁵¹ Although initially the abbess of Daijiiin, Riei has the first character of “Ri 理,” commonly taken by the abbesses of Hōkyōji, which places her in the Hōkyōji lineage. The joint positions held by the Daijiiin abbesses further solidified the relationship between Hōkyōji and Daijiiin during the Edo period. The eleventh abbess of Daijiiin, Chōzan 糴山, the daughter of Ashikaga Yoshiteru 足利 義輝 (1536-1565), was Hōkyōji’s eighteenth abbess. She also became de facto abbess of Keiaiji.

Keiaiji and the Ama Gozan System

Although its physical presence on the Kyoto landscape was short-lived, Keiaiji looms large in the history of Hōkyōji. It is through this association that Hōkyōji retains its position as the second highest-ranked *bikuni gosho* with abbesses who jointly held the symbolic abbacy of Keiaiji. The Ashikaga shogunate designated certain convents in Kyoto and Kamakura as *ama gozan* based on the *gozan* system for temples. The *gozan* (Five Mountain) network of Buddhist temples was instituted in Japan by Emperor Go-daigo in the early fourteenth century.¹⁵² Based on the Chinese system of the same name (Ch. Wushan), *gozan* temples were designated as such to serve as official, administration-sanctioned Zen temples in Kyoto and Kamakura.¹⁵³ They thus became an economically powerful sector of Zen Buddhism during the medieval period, wielding social and religious influence.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Sawada, *Hōkyōji*, 67.

¹⁵¹ *Hōkyōji chū Daijiiin denkei ryakki* (1873). Yoshitane is also pronounced Yoshimura.

¹⁵² Hōjō regents had given the honorary designation of *gozan* to temples in Kamakura during their rule (1185-1333), but the Go-Daigo and the Ashikaga Shogunate were instrumental in organizing and instituting the *gozan* system. See Martin Collcutt, *Five Mountains*, especially 91-129.

¹⁵³ The original *gozan* temples chosen by Go-Daigo between 1334-1336 were (in order of rank from highest to lowest) Nanzenji 南禅寺 and Daitokuji 大徳寺 (which, for a period, shared highest rank), Tōfukuji 東福寺, and Kenniji 健仁寺 in Kyoto and Kenchōji 建長寺 and Engakuji 圓學寺 in Kamakura. At the height of the *gozan* system under Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (ca. 1386), five temples each from Kyoto and Kamakura were ranked, with Nanzenji achieving the designation of *gozan no jō* (superior Gozan). They are, respectively, Tenryūji 天竜寺, Shōkokuji 相国寺, Kenniji, Tōfukuji, and Manjūji 万寿寺; Kenchōji, Engakuji, Jufukuji 寿福

The *ama gozan* system was structured after the *gozan*, with five designated convents in Kyoto and Kamakura, respectively.¹⁵⁵ Categorization as an *ama gozan* primarily indicated that the abbess was a member of a particular Dharma lineage.¹⁵⁶ Mudai Nyodai, Dharma heir (法嗣 *hōshi*) of Wuxue Zuyuan 無学祖元 (Jp. Mugaku Sogen; also known as Bukkō Kokushi 仏光国師; 1226-1286) and the founder of Keiaiji, was in the lineage of the prominent Zen master Musō Soseki 夢窓疎石 (1275-1351).¹⁵⁷ And many of the *bikuni gosho* were affiliated with Shōkokuji, the Ashikaga-sponsored monastery, relying on the teachings and affirmation of masters from that temple for certification and promotion within religious ranks.¹⁵⁸

Little information is known about the individual institutions that comprised the *ama gozan* in Kyoto because four of the five convents there were destroyed by the sixteenth century. After that, they existed in name only, through the shared abbacy held by abbesses of former sub-convents. Hōkyōji became part of the *ama gozan* system at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when the then abbess, Kugonni 久嚴尼 started to alternate abbess duties of Keiaiji with Daishōji after Keiaiji was lost to fire. While it is unclear exactly why Keiaiji was not rebuilt after it burned down, the high cost of maintaining the convent might have been a factor.

寺, Jōchiji 淨智寺, and Jōmyōji 淨妙寺. Collcutt speculates that the rankings under Go-Daigo are doubtful. *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, xviii.

¹⁵⁵ In Kyoto the *ama gozan* were, in order from highest to lowest rank, Keiaiji 景愛寺, Tsūgenji 通玄寺, Danrinji 檀林寺, Erinji 恵林寺, and Gonenji 護念寺. In Kamakura, they were Taiheiji 太平寺, Tōkeiji 東慶寺, Kokuonji 国恩寺, Gohōji 護法寺, and Zenmyōji 禅明寺. Harada Masatoshi, “Nyonin to Zenshū” [Women and Zen] in *Hotoke to onna*, ed. Nishiguchi Junko (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1997), 148. See also Ushiyama, “Buddhist Convents in Medieval Japan,” in *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan*, ed. Barbara Ruch (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002), 144. On the history and administration of specific convents in the *ama gozan* system, see Arakawa Reiko, “Keiaiji no enkaku: ama gozan kenkyū no hitokusari” [The origins of Keiaiji: a look at the research of the ama gozan], *Shoryōbu kiyō* 28 (1976): 57-69; and Oishi, “Bikuni gosho to muromachi bakufu,” 1-28.

¹⁵⁶ Harada, “Nyonin to Zenshū,” 151-153.

¹⁵⁷ For an overview of the life and career of Musō Soseki vis à vis the development of Rinzai Zen in the fourteenth century, see Martin Collcutt, “Musō Soseki,” in *The Origins of Japan's Medieval World: Courtiers, Clerics, Warriors, and Peasants in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Jeffrey P. Mass (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 261-294.

¹⁵⁸ Harada, “Nyonin to Zenshū,” 155.

Even while Keiaiji was extant, years passed without an abbess in residence. While it was an honor to be an abbess there, the high expenses involved with the position caused many abbesses to retire quickly.¹⁵⁹

Although the gozan convents were physically present for only a short period of time, they occupy an important place in convent history because they raised the level of convents' place in religious society on par—nominally, at least—with *gozan* temples. The abbesses were selected by the heads of the Inryōken 蔭涼軒 and Rokuon'in 鹿苑院 and were confirmed by a letter from the Rokuon'in.¹⁶⁰ This selection process extended to the branch temples which continued *ama gozan* lineages.¹⁶¹ The choosing of *gozan* abbesses differed from that of the *bikuni gosho*, which chose their successors internally; the abbess trained a successor chosen from a suitable pool of candidates, usually a family member or adequately high-ranking alternate.¹⁶²

The Imperial Buddhist Convents' "Purple Robe Incident"

One reason why the connection to the top-ranked *ama gozan* convent in Kyoto was important to Hōkyōji during the Edo period was the right to wear purple robes (*shie* 紫衣) that was granted to abbesses from Hōkyōji and Daishōji in their capacity as de facto abbesses of Keiaiji. The visual symbol of the purple robe and the status it conveyed as religious leaders was made more desirable by its exclusivity. Of the *ama gozan* in Kyoto, only the abbesses of Keiaiji were given permission to wear the purple robe during the Muromachi period.¹⁶³ In effect, this right was reserved for the Dharma heirs of the Keiaiji lineage, perpetuated by the abbesses of Hōkyōji and Daishōji.

The granting of purple robes was a practice that was started in 737 in Japan when Emperor Shōmu 聖武天皇 (r. 724-749) bestowed the honor on the priest Genbō 玄昉 (d. 746),

¹⁵⁹ Fukutō, *Rekishī no naka no kōjotachi*, 157; Harada, "Nyonin to Zenshū," 156.

¹⁶⁰ Ushiyama, "Buddhist Convents in Medieval Japan," 144; Harada, "Nyonin to zenshū," 155-156. The head of the Inryōken, a subtemple on the grounds of Rokuon'in, and the head of the Rokuon'in, a mortuary temple for Yoshimitsu, were priests who wielded administrative power in the sixteenth century over the gozan and ama gozan temples in their capacity as shogunal appointees. On the offices and history of the Inryōken and Rokuon'in, see Martin Collcutt, "Zen and the Gozan," *Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 3: *Medieval Japan*, ed. Yamamura Kōzō (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 605; idem, *Five Mountains*, 123.

¹⁶¹ Oishi, "Bikuni gosho to Muromachi bakufu," 15-17.

¹⁶² Harada, "Nyonin to zenshū," 157.

¹⁶³ Ushiyama, "Buddhist Convents," 151.

following the Chinese example.¹⁶⁴ In the mid-sixteenth century, the abbesses of three convents – Keikōin 慶光院, Zenkōji 善光寺, and Seiganji 誓願寺 – were allowed to wear purple robes in accordance with their status as eminent nuns (*shōnin* 聖人).¹⁶⁵ The conferral of purple robes was thus originally associated with imperial favor, both in China and Japan. In 1627, the prestige associated with the robes would be threatened by the so-called “Purple Robe Incident” (*shie jiken* 紫衣事件) in which the honor bestowed upon priests by Emperor Go-mizunoo was later stripped and the robes confiscated by the shogun, who had not approved the conferral. This disregard for the emperor’s power is historically linked to his abdication two years later.¹⁶⁶ The Purple Robe Incident did not hinder the subsequent granting of robes to abbesses during the Edo period, nor did it diminish the vestments’ prestige.

The high level of religious achievement associated with the granting of purple robes remained a goal and an honor to the abbesses of Hōkyōji throughout the Edo period. Evidence of this is seen in the petitions to the emperor Higashiyama (r. 1687-1709) by abbess Eishū 永秀 of Daishōji and abbess Rihō 里豊 of Hōkyōji to deny the request of a purple robe by abbess Shōan 聖安 of Donkein.¹⁶⁷ Shōan claimed she deserved to have a purple robe because the abbess of a branch convent, Keikōin, already had one. Eishū and Rihō protested the request on

¹⁶⁴ Daigan Matsunaga and Alicia Matsunaga, *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism*, vol. 1, *The Aristocratic Age* (Los Angeles and Tokyo: Buddhist Books International, 1974), 124. In China, purple was a color associated with rulers on the mainland as early as the Warring States period (ca. 480-221 BCE), and Empress Wu Zetian (r. 690-705) is said to be the first ruler to give purple robes to high-ranking priests. On the history of the purple robe in China, see John Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 100-103.

¹⁶⁵ Ushiyama, “Buddhist Convents,” 151.

¹⁶⁶ On the Purple Robe Incident, see Kumakura Isao, *Gomizuno’oin* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1982), 82-92. For information about the events leading up to Go-mizunoo’s abdication, including the Purple Robe Incident, see Butler, *Emperor and Aristocracy*, 231-234. Saitō Natsuki offers a different perspective, claiming the emperor and the shogunate acted together to undermine Daitokuji’s authority by enacting the historical incident in an attempt to shift state-sanctioned power to Nanzenji. See Saitō Natsuki, “Gozan jissetsu seido makki no Daitokuji: Shie jiken no rekishiteki zentei” [Historical assumptions about the “Purple Robe Incident”: Daitokuji in the later period of the Gozan Jissetsu organization], *Shigaku zasshi* 106, no. 7 (1997): 1263-1295.

¹⁶⁷ The dispute over the granting of purple robes to Shōan outlined here is chronicled in Oka, “Bikuni no gosho (ge),” 26-36.

the basis that only the abbess of Keiaiji was allowed to wear a purple robe. Eventually, Shōan was granted the right to wear a purple robe after being instated for one day as the abbess of Keiaiji. The unusual honor was made on the stipulation that the purple robe be limited to her (in other words, not passed down to Dharma heirs) and that she retire as abbess.¹⁶⁸ In 1708, the same year Shōan was given the right to wear the purple robe, Eishū and Rihō were also granted the honor.¹⁶⁹

A written statement regarding the matter of Donkein's purple robes (*Donkein shie ikken ni tsuki kōjō hikae* 曇華院紫衣一件に付口上扣; [A statement regarding Donkein's Purple Robe Incident]) dated the fifteenth day of the tenth month of Hōei 4 (1708) and a reply to the matter of Donkein's purple robes (*Donkein shie ni tsuki hensho hikae* 曇華院紫衣に付返書扣; [A note on the reply to Donkein's Purple Robe Incident]), kept in the Hōkyōji archives, document part of the exchange that occurred in 1708 regarding the granting of purple robes to the Donkein abbess.¹⁷⁰ Another document at Hōkyōji, a memo regarding the request of the abbess of Donkein to wear purple robes (*Donkein dono shie on'chaku on'negai ni tsuki oboe* 曇華院殿紫衣御着御願に付覚 [A note on the request by the abbess of Donkein for a purple robe]), which is undated, also refers to the incident.¹⁷¹ Daishōji, too, holds numerous documents pertaining to purple robes in 1708 in its archives, including a copy of the written statement regarding Donkein's request for purple robes (*Donkein shiegan ni tsuki kōjō oboe utsushi* 曇華院紫衣願に付口上覚写 [A copy of the written statement regarding Donkein's request for a purple robe]).¹⁷² Other letters in the Daishōji archives refer to the granting of purple robes to Daishōji. A note on the petition regarding the ceremony of purple robes (*Shie no gi ni tsuki gansho hikae* 紫衣の儀に付願書控 [A written application regarding the ceremony for the purple robe]) dated the seventeenth day of the fourth month of Hōei 4 and a journal commemorating the celebration of the purple robe (*Shie no oiwai nikki* 紫衣のお祝日記) dated the nineteenth day of the eleventh month of the same year confirm Eishū's successful request for the high honor for herself.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 27.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Kyōtofu Kyōiku Inkai, *Kyōtofu komonjo nado kinkyū chōsa hōkokusho*, 48.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 52.

¹⁷² Ibid., 13.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 14, 16. Eishū was granted the right to wear a purple robe on the fourteenth day of the eleventh month of Hōei 4. The following day Rihō and Shōan were also allowed the same privilege. Oka, "Kinsei no bikuno gosho (ge)," 27.

The protestation of Hōkyōji and Daishōji over the granting of purple robes illustrates the importance of the vestments to the convents. Not only was a purple robe a symbol of personal achievement but also conferred prestige upon the convent, ensuring its status and rank within the *bikuni gosho* network. It may have been seen as a threat to the order to have an abbess from a branch temple of Tsūgenji, the fifth-ranked *ama gozan*, be allowed to wear purple robes. The imperial decree of purple robes also honored the Dharma lineage to which the convent belonged.¹⁷⁴ Rihō may have argued to keep the purple robes within Daishōji and Hōkyōji for this reason. By limiting the robes to the abbesses of Mugai Nyodai's lineage, Nyodai's teaching remained highly respected among the Rinzai convents. The petitions by Rihō, Eishū, and Shōan illustrate the significance the abbesses placed on the allowance to wear purple robes. The vestments helped to symbolically raise the reputation of the convent and, as demonstrated particularly by Shōan, were a tangible sign of personal prestige. That Rihō and Eishū were also given the right to wear purple robes, as were other abbesses at Hōkyōji and Daishōji, underscores their high position among the *bikuni gosho*.

Visual Reminders: The Location and Recognition of Hōkyōji in the Edo Period

As seen in the excerpts from Hōkyōji's diary, the family connections and historical affiliations of the convent helped it gain religious, economic, and cultural authority during the Edo period and raised its prominence on the Kyoto landscape. The matrix of contemporary media gave the *bikuni gosho* a visibility which further substantiated its place in Kyoto history. With its connection to Keiaiji and its ranking as the second-highest imperial convent in the Edo period, Hōkyōji not only held a prominent position among early modern *bikuni gosho*, but was visible in Kyoto society at large as a noteworthy site. With its inclusion in tourist guides, maps, and representations of the city (*rakuchū rakugai zu*), it became recognizable as a cultural site that was important enough to be known, at least by name, and was made visible to the majority of the Kyoto population unable to enter its doors.

Rakuchū rakugaizu, folding screens depicting scenes in Kyoto and its surroundings painted from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, offer a unique, if somewhat anachronistic, view of the imperial capital during that time period.¹⁷⁵ The screens are notable

¹⁷⁴ See Steven Heine and Dale Wright, *Zen Ritual: Studies of Zen Buddhist Theory in Practice* (Oxford, England and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 274.

¹⁷⁵ Art historian Matthew McKelway asserts that the city represented in premodern *rakuchū rakugaizu*, which were all executed between 1520 and 1580, was of an earlier, nonspecific past. Rather than depict the contemporary turmoil that threatened the capital throughout the sixteenth century, the screens instead consisted of “a collection of elements that depended heavily on the

for their birds'-eye-view perspective and detailed description of the buildings, annual events, and people that populate the city. The seemingly cartographic nature of the paintings has also prompted some scholars to utilize the paintings as historical documents, a window into the layout and appearance of the past capital.¹⁷⁶

Hōkyōji appears on two of the earliest known *rakuchū rakugai zu*, the so-called Machida Screens now held in the National Museum of Japanese History in Chiba Prefecture, and the Uesugi Screens in the Yonezawa City Uesugi Museum.¹⁷⁷ On the Kamigyō (upper Kyoto) screen of the Machida pair, the convent is labeled as Hōkyōin dono, a reference to the high status of the Ashikaga woman living there. True to their actual locations, Daijūin appears next to Hōkyōji and is also labeled. (Fig 1.3) Importantly, the convents share the same cedar-bark wood roofs as other aristocratic mansions on the screens,¹⁷⁸ not the blue/silver tile roofs of temples, which groups them by social, rather than religious affiliation. On the Machida Screens, the convents Donkein (Fig. 1.4) and Sanjichionji are also depicted. The latter bears a cartouche on which is written its *goshō* name (Iriedono); it appears next to the large Konoe family residence. (Fig. 1.5)

Rakuchū rakugaizu have long been studied, and their function, creation, and reception well scrutinized in art history scholarship.¹⁷⁹ Matthew McKelway makes the compelling

appropriation of visual signs of “tradition” – such as their insistent emphasis on such antique themes as seasonal change and annual rituals and observances – and cultural memory” to encode political messages of control and stability. In *Capitalscapes*, 5. For a discussion of the difficulty assigning dates of execution, artist, and recipient, see *ibid.*, 126-142.

¹⁷⁶ Horiguchi Sutemi, for example, dated the paintings based on close examination of the appearance of the architecture depicted on the screens. See “Rakuchū rakugaizu byōbu no kenchiku-teki kenkyū: Muromachi jidai no jūtaku kō” [Architectural research on “scenes in and around the capital” folding screens: thoughts on residences in the Muromachi period], *Garon* 18 (1943): 2-40, cited in McKelway, *Capitalscapes*, 63.

¹⁷⁷ The Machida Screens are also called the Sanjō Screens, after the original owners. In Japan they are commonly referred to as the Rekihaku kō hon [Screens A in the National Museum of Japanese History] to differentiate them from another set of *rakuchū rakugaizu* in the museum’s collection, Rekihaku otsu hon (also known as Screens B, or the Takahashi screens).

¹⁷⁸ McKelway, *Capitalscapes*, 94.

¹⁷⁹ Major studies on the subject include Takeda Tsuneo’s essay in the catalog for an exhibition held at the Kyoto National Museum, in *Rakuchū rakugai zu* (Kyoto: Kadokawa Shoten, 1966); Tsuji Nobuo, “Rakuchū rakugai zu,” *Nihon no bijutsu* 121 (1976): 1-114; and Ozawa Hiromu, *Zusetsu Uesugi-bon Rakuchū rakugaizu byōbu o miru* [Looking at illustrations of the Uesugi

argument that the Machida Screens were painted as a means to visually assert the Ashikaga family's political dominance during the early sixteenth-century, pointing out the religious institutions, political allies, and relatives of Ashikaga members depicted on the screens.¹⁸⁰ The probable connection of the screens to an Ashikaga patron (viewer) accounts for the number of *bikuni gosho* included in this selective landscape. As mentioned above, Hōkyōji, Daijiin, Donkein, and Sanjichionji were popular destinations for Ashikaga daughters during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Daishōji, the top-ranked *bikuni gosho*, is noticeably absent, although on the physical landscape it is located very near Shōkokuji, which is included. In his analysis, McKelway accounts for this omission by noting its lack of connection to the Ashikaga family. By the early sixteenth century it was already established as an imperial, not shogunal, convent.¹⁸¹

Hōkyōji also appears on the Kamigyō screen of the Uesugi Screens. (Fig. 1.6) Nestled tightly among the other buildings, the convent is labeled in ink, which helps in its identification. The Uesugi Screens depict more buildings than the Machida Screens, which may explain why the buildings are closer together and why more convents are represented. Like the Machida Screens, the Uesugi Screens include Hōkyōji, Daijiin, (Fig. 1.7) Donkein, (Fig. 1.8) and Sanjichionji (Iriedono). (Fig. 1.9) In addition, Kōshōin, (Fig. 1.10) Keikōin, (Fig. 1.11) and Anzenji (Fig. 1.12) are also illustrated. The representation of seven convents suggests a familiarity on the part of the painter or patron with the current occupants and their political or social connections.¹⁸² Regardless of whether the screens were painted for a specific Ashikaga patron, the depiction signifies that the women in the convents at least warrant recognition and notation for posterity/identification.

Later screens from the Edo period do not include labeled convents, suggesting that the focus of the representations had shifted away from buildings associated with this segment of the ruling elite. The representations of the convents that appear on the *rakuchū rakugaizu*, however, offer a neat parallel to the historical significance of the convent, as seen in historiography of the subject. If the screens are viewed closely, Hōkyōji is noticeable, labeled,

Screens of “scenes in and around the capital”] (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1994). The journal, *Bungaku*, devoted a special issue to the historiography of *rakuchū rakugaizu* studies. See *Bungaku* 52 (1984). In English see McKelway, *Capitalscapes*.

¹⁸⁰ McKelway, *Capitalscapes*, 86-94.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² It is interesting to note, however, that the first character in the inscription for Hōkyōji is 法 (*hō*); the correct character is 宝 (*hō*). The mistaken character suggests the inscriber may not have been very familiar with the convent.

stands out in a position of prominence. In the case of the Machida and Uesugi Screens, they carry inscriptions of their names, giving them an honored place among other buildings for the elite. But, if seen in the visual scope of the entire screen, Hōkyōji blends into the scene of the capital, one set of buildings in a myriad landscape of people, roofs, and gold clouds, which together form a smooth, unified, ordered view of the Kamigyō area. Hōkyōji is at once distinguishable and distinguished, yet assimilatory and typical. An apt visual metaphor for this study, the convents become part of a normative view of the city yet are identified as sites worthy of recognition.

The audience for the *rakuchū rakugaizu* of the sixteenth century is relatively unknown. It is safe to assume, however, that the number of people able to view the screens was limited. Evidence in the written record suggests the screens were commissioned by courtiers or samurai and produced by painting professionals.¹⁸³ Private gifting and limited circulation of the screens ensured that they were viewed by few elite members of society and their descendants until the modern period.

Hōkyōji was painted in the early sixteenth century on *rakuchū rakugaizu* screens; almost two centuries later it began to be depicted in print in guidebooks for the capital. The audience for the guidebooks was larger and fundamentally different from that of the painted screens of the city. Printed for the literate public, guidebooks presented a view of Kyoto that differed greatly from the perspective of the city offered by the screens. While the screens encapsulated Kyoto visually, from a distance, with little variation in vantage and highly selective in the buildings included, guidebooks brought the city to street level, with short summaries that taught the reader about buildings, institution, history, and location. The city was arranged, not necessarily by geography, but by social, cultural, and political affiliation.

Hōkyōji was included in the *Kyō habutae*, one of the earliest guidebooks of Kyoto. Written as part sightseeing guide of famous places and part town directory,¹⁸⁴ the *Kyō habutae* included a wealth of information with headings ranging from natural sites to temples and shrines to merchants and bathhouses.¹⁸⁵ The result is the presentation of the imperial capital in

¹⁸³ See, for example, the provenance of the Uesugi screens, which are believed to have been commissioned by Oda Nobunaga 織田信長 (1534-1582) from Kano Eitoku 狩野永徳 (1543-1590) and given to Nobunaga's former rival, Uesugi Kenshin 上杉謙信 (a.k.a. Terutora 輝虎; 1530-1578), outlined in McKelway, *Capitalscapes*, 97-142.

¹⁸⁴ Noma, *Shinshū kyōto sōsho*, 2:2.

¹⁸⁵ For a detailed study of guidebooks and the transmission of cultural knowledge in the Edo period, see Elizabeth Berry, *Japan in Print: Information and Nation in the Early Modern Period* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

six fascicles, outlining the people, places, and sites that define the city. The *bikuni gosho* appeared in the fifth fascicle, along with lists of official ranks, daimyo residences, and government officials. Of the *bikuni gosho*, only Rinkyūji, which had been established only four years earlier, appears in the fascicle devoted to temples.¹⁸⁶

In the *Kyō habutae*, Hōkyōji was listed second under the heading of “*Bikuni gosho*.” Unlike the internal convent rankings which placed Daishōji first, in the guidebook Donkein appeared first, which suggests the listings were not organized by convent hierarchy. Nor were they ordered geographically, as Daijiin, which shared grounds with Hōkyōji, was listed seventh in the same “*bikuni gosho*” section. The entry for Hōkyōji is brief and contains the same information as the other *bikuni gosho*: under the convent name is the address, land holdings, and steward (*keishi* 家司).¹⁸⁷ This placement illustrates the position they occupied in the mind of the compilers as members of the aristocratic and military elite, rather than religious institutions.

In addition to *Kyō Habutae*, Hōkyōji appears in *Yōshū fushi* 雍州府志 [Chronicle of Yamashiro] (1686), a compendium of information ranging from topography to history and lifestyle, written in *kanbun* (Chinese characters), by Kurokawa Dōyū 黒川道祐 (d. 1691); *Yamashiro meishō shi* 山城名勝志, a guide of about 2,700 sites in Yamashiro (Kyoto and surrounding areas) drawn from historical sources; *Sanshū meiseki shi* 山州名跡志 [Chronicle of famous places in the capital region] (1711), which included current information about topography and geography based on the observations of the author, Hakkei 白慧 (late seventeenth-early eighteenth century); and *Yamashiro meiseki junkō shi* 山城名跡巡行志 [Chronicles of circumambulations through Yamashiro’s historical landmarks] (1754), a book of suggested tours to sites ranging from the imperial palace to shrines, temples, and historically famous places (*meisho* 名所).¹⁸⁸ The entries are brief, indicating location, religious affiliation, the fact that imperial princesses serve as abbesses, and that the founder of Hōkyōji is unknown. The *Sanshū meiseki shi* even records the direction the entrance gate faces (south).¹⁸⁹

Hōkyōji is not as visible as a sightseeing destination in tourist guides as Rinkyūji and

¹⁸⁶ *Kyō habutae*, fascicle 4, in Noma, *Shinshū Kyōto sōsho*, 2:153.

¹⁸⁷ This information listed for Hōkyōji is Teranouchidōri, ogawa nishi 寺之内通小川西, 380 *roku* 石, Okamoto Genba 岡本玄蕃, respectively. Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Hōkyōji also appears in the Taishō period guide of Kyoto sites, *Kyōtobō mokushi* 京都坊目誌, compiled by Usui Kosaburō 碓井小三郎 in 1916 and published in 1917. All of the guides listed above are published in Noma Kōshin, *Shinshū Kyōto sōsho*, 23 vols. Hakkei is also known as Sakauchi Naoyori 阪内真頼.

¹⁸⁹ Hakkei, “*Sanshū meiseki shi*,” in Noma Kōshin, *Shinshū Kyōto sōsho*, 16: 262.

Reikanji, which appear in Edo-period guides to famous places, in addition to town compendia.¹⁹⁰ The conversion of convents to tourist sites seems to be related to location and precedent, rather than only ranking within structures of religious or political power. Rinkyūji, for example, was listed in six other Edo-period guidebooks from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries after it appeared in the same fascicle as temples in *Kyō habutae*.¹⁹¹ Converted from the palace of the founding abbess, Gen'yō, on the grounds of Shūgakuin, the retirement palace for Go-mizunoo, shortly after his death in 1680, Rinkyūji nonetheless quickly became a site worth knowing and “seeing,” a fact corroborated by its appearance four years after its founding in *Kyō habutae*. Reikanji, too, founded in 1654, quickly became a tourist destination, listed in *Yōshū fushi* and *Kinki reiranki*, both published in the 1680s. The association with the founders of these convents, Gen'yō and Sōchō, respectively, with the newly deceased ex-emperor, Go-mizunoo, may have contributed to the compilers' awareness of the buildings. The location of Rinkyūji on the grounds of Shūgakuin, and the proximity of Reikanji to other famous sites along the popular routes of the Higashiyama area of Kyoto may also account for the presence of the convents in numerous tourist guides throughout the Edo period. While Hōkyōji was not considered a “famous place,” its appearance along other bikuni gosho aligned it with the aristocratic class from which the nuns came. The lack of reference to specific nuns in the brief summaries provided in the guides gives it a continuity as a “place to know,” with the buildings themselves standing in for the imperial women behind its doors to offer a timeless front of prestige and recognition.

The appearance of Hōkyōji in print and paintings from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries alone does not constitute “knowledge” of the convent in the sense of its structural foundation – its religious affiliation, occupants, daily happenings, and rituals. Rather, the awareness of the convent by a large segment of the population gave it a presence on the landscape of Kyoto. As early as the mid-seventeenth century, guidebooks provided commoners and elites classes alike an abridged view of the city, organizing it according to the author's sense of value and rank. Literacy replaced class privilege as the key to “visit” the city's temples, famous sites, and popular purveyors. By the eighteenth century, Kyoto was

¹⁹⁰ Both convents appear, for example, in the *Shūi miyako meisho zue* (1787). Akisato Kiyofuku, *Shūi miyako meisho zue* [Gleanings of illustrated famous places of the capital], vol. 8: *Nihon zue zenshū* (Tokyo: Nihon Zuihitsu Taisei Kankōkai, 1929).

¹⁹¹ Other guidebooks include *Yōshū fushi*, *Shūi Miyako meisho zue* 拾遺都名所図絵 (1787), *Miyako kagetsu meisho* 都花月名所 [Famous places for entertainment in the capital] (1793), *Kinki reiranki* 近畿歴覽記 [Records of journeys around the Kinki region] (ca. 1684-1688), *Yamashiro meishō shi*, and *Yamashiro meiseki junkō shi*.

accessible to the highest elites and most literate commoners.¹⁹² Along with tourist guides of famous places, the travel guide literature of Edo period Kyoto constitutes an important indicator of what was seen as worthy of note in the imperial capital. Hōkyōji fit in with the famous temples, aristocratic residential complexes, shogunal palaces labeled on *rakuchū rakugaizu* screens, and it belonged in groupings of other convents in guidebooks and books depicting famous places of the capital. The visibility of Hōkyōji – if not open to the public, than at least accessible by name – made it a worthy place to know in early modern Japan.

Conclusion

Period sources of painted screens, convent diaries, and guidebooks reflect and reveal aspects of Hōkyōji as it was seen during the medieval and early modern periods. Through networks that spanned personal relationships, religious institutional histories, shared upbringings, and public knowledge, the women of Hōkyōji wielded informal authority in overlapping spheres of influence of religion, culture, and politics. Together, the different spheres provide a definition of the convent that supports its cultural position during the early modern period. Through their roles as noble daughters, *bikuni gosho*, and, as will be explicated later in this project, artists in their own right, imperial Buddhist nuns were at the nexus of spheres of power that gave them a presence in the cultural landscape of early modern Kyoto. Denied a position of influence through the normative channels of official political and social power bestowed on male members of society and their associated institutions, Hōkyōji and its occupants have still carved out a place for themselves in the history of Kyoto. Crucial to this situation is the connections made through groups (or, more accurately in cases, groupings) to which the convent belonged – the imperial family, the *bikuni gosho*, *ama gozan* – that crisscrossed the highest echelons of society and gave Hōkyōji social, religious, and cultural authority. The place of Hōkyōji during this time is important for the ensuing discussion about the visual and material culture at the convent; knowing where nuns belonged within their communities gives a solid foundation upon which further discussion of class and gender, education and the individual, and artistic endeavors can proceed.

¹⁹² On the phenomenon of cultural knowledge gained through information disseminated in print, see Berry, *Japan in Print*, especially pages 185-208.

Chapter Two

The Question of Gendered Space: The Choice of Wall Painting Themes in the Hōkyōji Shoin

The degree to which gender plays a role in the creation and understanding of visual culture associated with women can be discussed by looking at the spaces that comprise the living residence of the women of Hōkyōji. The preceding chapter suggested gender was one association through which women at Hōkyōji formed relationships and social connections. Mostly, however, the last chapter revealed that gender was transcended as an organizing force by other factors, such as class, family, and religion, that also defined Hōkyōji's place in the Kyoto landscape. Gender as an analytical frame in the visual culture of an imperial Buddhist convent is taken up again here through discussion of the interior decorated spaces in which the Hōkyōji nuns lived, worked, and worshiped.

As a space that defines and describes the roles of the women who lived there, the convent is a vital site of examination that underscores the relationship between women and art in the Edo period. As Beatriz Colomina states, "Architecture is not simply a platform that accommodates the viewing subject. It is a viewing mechanism that produces the subject. It precedes and frames its occupant."¹⁹³ As part of the interior architectural structure, wall paintings, or *shōhekiga*, similarly, reflect and frame the occupant of a room.¹⁹⁴ Buildings at Hōkyōji follow conventions of temple plan and design with no discernable difference in layout, size, or construction material from temples built for male occupants. Indeed, some imperial

¹⁹³ Beatriz Colomina, "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism," in *Sexuality and Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 83.

¹⁹⁴ Takeda Tsuneo defines *shōhekiga* as *haritsuke-e* 貼付絵 (paintings on paper or silk applied to panels) on interior architectural spaces including types of *fusuma-e* 襖絵 (pictures on sliding door panels); *shōji koshi haritsuke-e* 障子腰貼付絵 (paintings on paper or silk applied to the lower section of translucent sliding panels); *tenbukuro fusuma-e* 天袋襖絵 and *jibukuro fusuma-e* 地袋襖絵 (paintings on sliding door cabinets at the top and bottom, respectively, of an alcove with staggered shelves in the *shoin zukuri* style) and paintings in the *tokonoma* 床の間 (display alcove) space. In *Kinsei shoki shōheiga no kenkyū* [Studies in Japanese wall partition paintings and folding screens of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1983), 2.

Buddhist convent halls were converted from palaces previously belonging to men. As part of the architectural structure, however, *shōhekiga* can help identify social and cultural phenomena of specific moments in a building's history.

Shōhekiga, integral to the definition and demarcation of the walls on which they are painted, might be thought of as providing a “biography” of interior spaces in their materials and subject matter. The materials used in making the wall paintings suggest economic status and time period, and the backing paper used to line the paintings may have written traces that indicate patron, original site, or construction cost. The iconography of the wall paintings may reflect the date when they were made, the prevailing social and political circumstances of the period of production, and by whom they were commissioned. Analysis of *shōhekiga* in light of these factors may therefore open up new avenues of thought on the significance of spaces occupied by women.

Although it may seem effective to study the built environment and the decoration within it as an integrated whole, the disciplines of architecture and art history have, for the most part, approached them separately, with notable exceptions.¹⁹⁵ In Japanese academia, art historians have typically focused on the artists and artistic styles of *shōhekiga* while architectural historians have addressed the material and technological manifestations of space and its construction. Architectural historian Nishi Kazuo, however, advocates an integrated approach, describing the “close relationship” between architecture and *shōhekiga* in his treatise, *Kenchiku kenkyū no shinshiten* [A new viewpoint on architectural research], arguing that researchers should consider them together when studying an architectural site.¹⁹⁶ His research with Ozawa Asae on *shōhekiga* in situ, examining wall paintings to record the transformation of buildings over time, exemplifies his integrated approach to architecture and painting.¹⁹⁷ The

¹⁹⁵ Several studies on temple sites, focusing on their architecture and objects, have recently been published in the United States: Andrew Watsky, *Chikubushima: Deploying the Sacred Arts in Momoyama Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); Gregory Levine, *Daitokuji: The Visual Cultures of a Zen Monastery* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005); and Sherry Fowler, *Murōji: Rearranging Art and History at the Japanese Buddhist Temple* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).

¹⁹⁶ Nishi Kazuo, *Kenchikushi kenkyū no shinshiten*, vol. 1: *Kenchiku to shōhekiga* [Architecture and wall partition paintings] (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 1999).

¹⁹⁷ Nishi Kazuo and Ozawa Asae, “Nanzenji Ōhōjō zenshin tatemono no fukugen kōsatsu: kenchiku to shōhekiga no sōgōteki kentō” [An inquiry of the reconstruction of the former buildings of the main abbot's residence at Nanzenji: an integrated examination of architecture

art historian Takeda Tsuneo has also done extensive research on *shōhekiga* in architectural spaces.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, art historians, historians, and architectural historians have worked together to reconstruct the interior of Edo Castle, which was destroyed in 1873.¹⁹⁹ They have also adopted an interdisciplinary approach to examine sites with complicated histories, such as the *shoin* of Kajūji 勧修寺, the main abbot's quarters (*ōhōjō* 大方丈) of Nanzenji 南禅寺, and the principal castle complex (*Honmaru* 本丸) of Nijōjō 二条城.²⁰⁰

Although studies incorporating gender, architecture, and *shōhekiga* remain few, research by scholars such as Chino Kaori, Ozawa Asae, and Kamei Wakana on that subject has recently broadened the field of architectural and art history. From 2002 to 2004, Ozawa led a research group that explored the painting programs and architectural spaces built and decorated for women in a study entitled, *Josei no tame no kenchiku to sono naibu kūkan no enshutsu no shiteki kenkyū* [A historical study of architecture for women and its interior space made for effect], financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Ozawa's research in the study focused on the *Osato goten* 御里御殿, the palace where imperial consorts gave birth, located within Emperor Go-sai's palace complex.²⁰¹ Another researcher in

and wall paintings], *Nihon Kenchiku Gakkai Keikakukei ronbunshū* 42 (February, 1997): 201-207.

¹⁹⁸ See "Shōhekiga," in Takeda, *Kinsei shoki shōheiga no kenkyū*, 27-195.

¹⁹⁹ Results of their research culminated in part in a special exhibition held at the Tokyo National Museum and published in Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, ed. *Tokubetsu tenkan Edojō shōhekiga no shita: Ōhiroma, matsu no rōka kara ōoku made* [Special exhibition, preliminary drawings of the wall paintings at Edo Castle: from the Ōhiroma and Pine Corridor to the Great Interior] (Tokyo: Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, 1988).

²⁰⁰ Nishi Kazuo, *Kenchiku Kenkyū no Shinshiten*, 1: 4-6. Nishi points to a few examples of published works in which architecture and *shōhekiga* have been addressed together: *Shōhekiga zenshū*, vol. 10: *Nanzenji ōhōjō* (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppansha, 1968); and Fujioka Michio, *Kyōto goshō* (Tokyo: Shōkokusha, 1956).

²⁰¹ See Ozawa Asae, "Kinsei daira ni okeru Osatogoten no hyōmen, ishō, to yōto ni tsuite: josei no tame no kenchiku ni kansuru shiteki kenkyū (1)" [The architecture and function of the Osatogoten of the Imperial Palace in the early modern period: research on architecture for women (1)], *Gakujitsu kōen kōgaishū. F-2, Kenchiku rekishi, ishō* (2004): 229-230. Furuta Ryō touches on the relationship between the Osatogoten and the current painting program in the Reikanji *omote shoin*, citing the research of Ozawa and Kamei on the same subject, in his essay, "Reikanji shoin shōhekiga ni tsuite" [Interior wall paintings in the reception suite of Reikanji], in *Amamonzeki jin no sekai*, 341-346.

the group, Kamei Wakana, focused on the theme of Chinese Children at Play, which appears on sliding door panels and on folding screens at imperial Buddhist convents.²⁰² The research of both scholars follows the lead of Chino Kaori, whose seminal work on the relationship between the female gender of the occupant and her surroundings, expounded in the essay, “Tennō no haha no tame no kaiga: Nanzenji Ōhōjō no shōhekiga o megutte” [Paintings for the emperor’s mother: a study of the wall decoration of the Main Abbot’s Rooms at Nanzenji], was the first to discuss the iconography of the painting program on the living spaces of a high-ranking woman during the 1600s through a gender approach.²⁰³ The work of Chino and Ozawa raises the importance of gender in the choice of subject matter, but as I will argue, we must also consider other factors such as social standing, religion, and painting precedent in the choice of painting program themes in architectural spaces for women.

The need to address gender when studying interior architectural spaces for women is made clear in statements such as this, from a twenty-first century Japanese scholar describing the *shōhekiga* at Daishōji, another imperial Buddhist convent:

Daishōji differs from other temples as the interior arrangements made according to fixed rules (しつらい) inside the *hōjō* are feminine and cute. Beautiful flowers and charming animals are painted on the *fusuma* and *byōbu*. Certainly, this was done to assuage the loneliness of the princesses separated from the (imperial) palace.²⁰⁴

The above quote highlights the difficulty in explaining the choice of subject matter for the *shōhekiga* at the imperial convents. Because the occupant of the convent is female, it is easy to read “femininity” into her surroundings. In fact, the themes of the painting programs at Daishōji or Hōkyōji (or other imperial convents) are not particular to secular or religious residential architecture for women. The presence of such *shōhekiga* at temples leads to the questions of if they were chosen specifically for the women who

²⁰² Kamei Wakana, “Josei no tame no kenchiku to ‘karako’-zu no imi” [Architecture for women and the meaning of “Karako”-zu], in *Josei no tame no kenchiku to sono naibu kūkan no enshutsu ni kansuru shiteki kenkyū*.

²⁰³ Chino Kaori, “Tennō no haha no tame no kaiga: Nanzenji Ōhōjō no shōhekiga o megutte,” in *Bijutsu to jendā: hitaishō no shisen*, ed. Suzuki Tokiko, Chino Kaori, and Mabuchi Akiko (Tokyo: Brukke, 2003), 83-128. Chino’s essay will be discussed in detail below.

²⁰⁴ Umiya Yūko, “Amamonzeki Daishōji: Shiki oriori no miyabi” [Daishōji Imperial Buddhist Convent: elegance in each season], *Kōshitsu = Our Imperial Family* 18 (Spring, 2003): 68.

lived in convents and if they were imbued with intended special meaning to female occupants. While a “feminine” style of paintings at convents may not be discernable, a “gendered” view of *shōhekiga* can indeed be argued. The occupant of a room cannot be separated from her surroundings; her surroundings define and are defined by her.

The Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons subject in the *shoin* of Hōkyōji is enticing as a “gendered” theme because of possible readings of its motifs and its presence in rooms designed for use by women.²⁰⁵ To date, no documents related to the subject matter of the *shōhekiga* have been found, although that does not mean they do not exist. In the absence of written explanation for the choice, we can look to the paintings at Hōkyōji and other examples to begin to understand why the theme might have been appropriate for the women at the convent. Hōkyōji was not the only imperial Buddhist convent to have paintings of Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons. Large-scale paintings with the Rice Cultivation theme also remain extant at Reikanji, Daishōji and Donkein.²⁰⁶ The presence of Rice Cultivation-themed painting programs at numerous convents suggests that there was special significance to the farming

²⁰⁵ Other popular themes at the convents include the *Four Accomplishments* (*kinki shoga* 琴棋書画), *Chinese Children at Play* (*karako asobi* 唐子遊び) and *Birds and Flowers* (*kachō* 花鳥). The *Four Accomplishments*, a common theme in Chinese and Japanese painting, depicts the cultural arts which were needed to be considered a gentlemen-scholar. In Japanese the term, *kinki shoga*, was comprised of the four characters for music (*koto* or *kin*; Ch. *qin*), Chinese chess (*ki*; Ch. *qi*), calligraphy (*sho*; Ch. *shu*), and painting (*ga*; Ch. *hua*), respectively. *Four Accomplishment* paintings belong to Donkein, Reikanji, and Chōfukuji. All three *Four Accomplishments* painting programs were executed by members of the Kano school before the Tenmei fire of 1788. Reizei Tamehito, “Monzeki niin no kaiga: shōheiga o chūshin to shite” [Paintings in imperial Buddhist convents: a study of wall paintings], in *Monzeki amadera no meihō*, ed. Kasumi Kaikan (Tokyo: Kasumi Kaikan, 1992), 175. Decoration for interior spaces also included animal motifs and flowers. Daishōji, for example, has on its inner rooms of the *shoin* a theme of different animals – large-scale motifs of deer, chickens, birds – in bright pigments arranged in individual or small groups against a plain background dusted with clouds of gold powder. The Daishōji *shoin* is said by convent tradition to have been painted in the mid-Edo period by an unknown artist. Like Hōkyōji, Daishōji was mostly burnt down in the Tenmei fire (1788), and it is likely that the *shoin* paintings are therefore contemporary with Hōkyōji’s. Reizei, “Monzeki niin no kaiga,” 168.

²⁰⁶ Daishōji and Donkein each have a pair of six-panel folding screens, while the *ni no ma* in the *oku shoin* of Reikanji is decorated with wall panels with the theme. The Reikanji *shōhekiga* will be discussed below.

theme for women at imperial convents circa 1800. The fact that the theme was also seen on walls of temples for men from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century is also significant and will be examined as well.

Overview of the *Shoin* at Hōkyōji

The *shoin* occupies the northeast corner of the Hōkyōji compound, north of the *hondō*, to which it is connected by the upper corridor (上廊下 *jōrōka*) and the lower corridor (下廊下 *gerōka*) which flank a central courtyard between the two buildings.²⁰⁷ The length of the main ridgepole is 15.8 meters, and the transverse beams are 12.8 meters, making it the second-largest building at Hōkyōji.²⁰⁸ After the Tenmei Fire of 1788, the *shoin* was the first main building to be rebuilt at Hōkyōji, completed in 1798. With the completion of the *hondō* in 1830 and the addition of the *chokusakudō* in 1847, Hōkyōji took the shape it still retains today. Typical of *shoin* architecture of the Edo period, the building has a hip-and-gable roof construction, with gable pediments embellished with latticework.

The *shoin* was the reception hall at Hōkyōji, the place where guests were received, as well as the daily living space for the nuns. The building consists of twelve rooms laid out in roughly three rows. The rooms furthest to the east were, from the north, respectively, the *Gozanoma* 御座ノ間 (the abbess' room), which contains a *tokonoma* 床の間 (alcove) and *chigaidana* 違い棚 (staggered shelves), the *Ōhiroma* 大広間 (reception room), the largest room in the *shoin*, and the *Jō no goenzashiki* 上ノ御縁座敷, a small anteroom. To the west of these large spaces were smaller, more private rooms named after the animal painting themes on their walls. The paintings on the *fusuma* of the inner rooms of the *shoin* are attributed to Yoshimura Kōkei 吉村孝敬 (1769-1836), a student of Maruyama Ōkyo and the son of the painter Yoshimura Ranshū 吉村蘭州 (1739-1816). The westernmost row of rooms were reserved for daily needs and were, from the north, the *Gokyakunoma* 御客ノ間 (guest room), the *Gofukunoma* 呉服ノ間 (wardrobe), the *Godaisunoma* 御台子ノ間 (hot water room), and the *Ōmiya* 御三間 (third room). Other service areas in the *kuri* and a hallway connecting back to the entrance foyer completed the residential spaces in the *shoin*. The *shoin* remains largely unchanged from its original building date of 1798.²⁰⁹ A veranda, a half-bay wide, surrounds

²⁰⁷ See Figure 0.2 for an overall floorplan of Hōkyōji Imperial Convent

²⁰⁸ The *hondō* has a ridgepole length of 18.2 meters and transverse beam lengths of 14.1 meters. Murakami Jin'ichi, *Kinki chihō no kinsei shaji kenchiku 2:1 Kyōto* (Tokyo: Tōyō Shorin, 2002), 261.

²⁰⁹ Fujizawa, *Hōkyōji kenzōbutsu chōsa hōkokusho*, 9.

the perimeter of the *shoin*. Originally, wooden rain shutters (*amado* 雨戸) were installed along the veranda, but they have been replaced with glass doors.²¹⁰

Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons in the Shoin

The painting program by Maruyama Ōshin 円山応震 (1790-1838) in the two largest rooms of the *shoin*, the *gozanoma* and the *ōhiroma*, at Hōkyōji provides a useful case study of gender and the decoration and definition of interiors. The choice of the theme of Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons (*shiki kōsaku zu* 四季耕作図) raises questions about convent iconography and the factors that impact the description of architectural spaces. Eighteen panels, covering the west and south walls of the *gozanoma* and the north and west walls of the *ōhiroma* are painted with scenes of the annual cycle of rice production. (Fig. 2.1) The motifs and visual progression of preparing fields, planting rice, harvesting crops, and polishing rice place the program in the genre of images of Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons (*Shiki kōsaku zu* 四季耕作図). The seasonal and cultivation progression starts in the northernmost room, the *gozanoma*, on the four panels of the west wall.²¹¹ The first scene on the northernmost panel is dominated by a large plum tree bearing the first blossoms of spring. The presence of the tree indicates the spring season, which continues in the next panel. (Fig. 2.2) The second panel is divided into two registers: a flowering plum occupies the lower half of the panel, anchored among newly plowed fields. The upper register of the second panel depicts a man walking behind an ox in a familiar motif of a farmer plowing his fields. (Fig. 2.3) The motif is commonly seen on paintings of Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons, but Ōshin tweaked the visual recognition slightly; instead of showing the man and ox in the act of plowing furrows in a field, they were painted with the man carrying the plow as he and the ox walk on the ridge between fields. The plowed fields in the lower register complete the association between the figures and the act of plowing.

The other two panels on the west wall emphasize the spring season with images of women and children picking young seedlings among spring flowers. The small figures are clustered in the foreground. In general the motifs are sparsely placed on the panels, but this group concentrates the activity in the lower left corner, moving the eye toward the next set of panels on the south wall of the *gozanoma*. The westernmost panel on the south side is illustrated with figures leveling the fields for planting. Trees laden with green leaves indicate the changing of the seasons into late spring. Moving eastward, the next scenes depict planting

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ The east walls of both the *gozanoma* and *ōhiroma* have sliding panels covered in *shoji* paper, and the south wall of the *ōhiroma* has no panels separating it from the *goenzashiki*.

rice seedlings in fields, weeding and irrigation, respectively. The bright green foreground of growing rice stalks in the irrigation panel emphasizes the productivity of the field and the height of the summer season. (Fig. 2.4)

The four panels on the north wall of the *ōhiroma*, which are placed on the reverse side of the summer scenes, continue the farming theme with motifs that indicate autumn. From the east, the first two panels show the rice harvest and threshing rice. (Fig. 2.5) The presence of amaranths around the threshers further marks the season. The third panel shows scenes of winnowing and hulling rice. The large architectural structure on this panel and the larger scale of the figures on the second panel highlight the human activity involved in this stage of the cultivation process. (Fig. 2.6) The fourth panel, closest to the west corner, does not have any figures but shows rice stalks drying on a large bamboo rack. Fall foliage on the maple tree next to the rack indicates the season, and the lack of human activity offers a peaceful counterbalance to the busy action of the previous scenes.

Six panels on the west wall of the *ōhiroma* complete the *Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons* composition. The northernmost panel closest to the autumn scenes continues the work of the late season, storing the rice in straw bags. (Fig. 2.7) The placement of a chestnut tree on this panel suggests the season of fall.²¹² Panel two shows men bringing bags of rice to the granary. The granary itself is suggested in the third panel by a thatched roof, marking the end of the cultivation process. Wild geese flying over the distant landscape in the following panels complete the agricultural cycle with imagery of late autumn.

The theme of bucolic life in the countryside is illustrated through a light palette with a limited number of figures and landscape, animal and flower motifs set among a slightly modulated background of tans and intermittent gold washes. Color is applied sparingly with the most dramatic reds used for the color of autumnal leaves. Gold powder applied judiciously throughout the scenes brightens the paintings and adds a feeling of luxuriousness to them. Juxtaposed with the gold is the conservative use of green pigment, which mutes the color scheme in the depiction of preparing, sowing, and reaping rice. The gold “clouds” also add to the feeling of undefined space, increasing the distance within the painting.

Ōshin’s placement and varying scale of motifs throughout the eighteen panels also enhance the interior space within the painting. On the west wall of the *gozanoma*, the two

²¹² Examples of motif of chestnuts, sometimes paired with persimmon, indicating the autumn harvest in eighteenth-century painting can be seen in Karinsha, ed., *Zoku, Nihon no ishō: mon'yō no saijiki* [Japanese design in art], Part II. Motifs of the Four Seasons, vol. 9: *aki* [autumn] (Kyoto: Kyōto Shoin, 1995), 88-91.

northernmost panels have scenes of spring, with flowering cherry trees rising from prepared and fallow fields in the lower register. The large elements of the fields and trees at the bottom of the *fusuma* anchors the composition and creates a foreground, while a small figure of a farmer walking behind an ox draws the eye to the middle ground, expanding the distance back into the painting. The eye is drawn further back to a mountain, the rounded peak of which is partially hidden by gold clouds. This mountain peak continues to the next panel, forming a range of mountains that is articulated only very lightly by an ink outline, but indicates a distant background for the remaining three panels on the west wall.

On the south wall of the *gozanoma*, the farming activity of preparing the fields for planting occurs in the westernmost panel, the one that forms a corner with the west wall. Like the cherry tree in the spring scenes, the element of green trees in the lower register draws the eye down, anchoring the panel and creating a foreground. The field preparation takes place above the clump of trees in the middle register, which suggests the action is behind the trees, moving the eye back into the painting plane. The eye continues upward, deeper into the picture plane, to view a house in the next panel, which has been drawn in the middle register. (Fig. 2.8) In the lower register of that same panel, a group of farmers plant seedlings, but the scale of the figures is much smaller than other figures in the panels. The reason for this may be the large motif of the house in the middle register. The figures are in the proper scale to appear at a considerable distance in the *foreground* from the house, despite being smaller than it. Continuing to the third panel, the middle register is occupied by a grove of pine trees that partially shade the house on one side and abut a rice field that is being weeded on the other. The viewpoint of the painting is brought from an almost birds'-eye view in the second panel, as the planting of the fields and the house seem to be from a great distance, to ground level as stalks of rice loom in the foreground, painted at the bottom of the wall panel. The fourth and easternmost panel continues the farming activity in the foreground, with a large motif of a farmer irrigating his fields with a water-drawing device that occupies almost half of the panel. The close-up view of the farmer collapses the distance within the scene and draws the viewer's eye down to the right corner of the panel, where the motif anchors the composition. Foreground, middleground, and background are thus established throughout the painting program, but they vary from panel to panel. Despite the shifts in perspective, however, the painting program maintains its coherence through the inclusion of elements that stretch across panels.

In the *ōhiroma*, the main motifs for farming are placed in the lower half of the *fusuma* panels on both the north and the west walls, although spatial distance is indicated by additional elements, such as fields in the middle register on the first and second panels of the north wall and mountains outlined on the fourth panel of the west wall. By varying the placement of

motifs and the scale of figures, Ōshin was able to illustrate activities that occurred over the passage of time in a continuous, comprehensive, and comprehensible program.

Ōshin's use of space reflects his training in the Maruyama school. Ōshin studied with his adopted father, Maruyama Ōzui 円山応瑞 (1766-1829).²¹³ Although he was too young to have trained with his grandfather, Ōkyo, as he was five when Ōkyo died, it can be seen that Ōshin followed his basic principles of painting from observation and large format composition in the *shoin* paintings. Ōkyo's strong belief that painting should begin with observation of an object (*shasei* 写生) formed a major component of his painting style and distinguished his style from the academic painting style of the Kano and Tosa schools. In a painting treatise (*garan* 画論) entitled *Sensai Maruyama sensei den* 仙斎円山先生伝 [The life of Master Sensai Maruyama] (1801), Ōkyo's student, Oku Bunmei 奥文鳴 (d. 1813), outlined his teacher's thoughts on painting from observation. According to Bunmei, Ōkyo believed a painter could express the inner spirit of an object if the outside appearance was captured. However, the interior beauty and exterior appearance were not automatically linked, so it was important to draw an object from observation and create a new image, in order to make a [comprehensive] painting.²¹⁴

Ōshin's naturalistic details of fields, architecture, farming equipment, and figures seem to reflect the elder Maruyama's emphasis of painting from observation of nature. The expression of space within the painting also reflects Ōkyo's interest in three-dimensional representation. In some of his paintings, Ōkyo experimented with Western perspective to achieve a sense of great distance. On the other hand, he disparaged the Kano school reliance on painting models and precedents. The rote reproduction of others' paintings, in his view, emphasized only brushwork, without capturing the essence of an object. Kano compositions

²¹³ Ōshin's biological father was Kinoshita Ōju 木下応受 (1777-1815), Ōkyo's second son. Ōju was adopted into his mother's natal family as successor to the Kinoshita line, but continued as a painting disciple of Ōkyo.

²¹⁴ Oku Bunmei, "Sensai Maruyama sensei den," in Sasaki Jōhei, "Edo jidai ni okeru Chūgoku kaiga shisō no juyō to tenkai: Kanōha, Tosaha soshite Maruyama Ōkyo" [The reception and development of Chinese thought in the Edo period: the Kano school, Tosa school, and Maruyama Ōkyo], *Kyōto bigaku bijutsu shigaku* 10 (March, 1989): 31. For additional information about Oku's painting treatise and Ōkyo's painting philosophy, see Timon Screech, "Ōkyō's New Concept," in *The Shogun's Painted Culture: Fear and Creativity in the Japanese States, 1760-1829* (London: Reaktion, 2000), 167-207.

were therefore seen to be only interested in the painting surface, balancing motifs and space, rather than actual landscapes.²¹⁵

The depiction of Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons at Hōkyōji is one example of the subject painted on *shōhekiga* in a long history that dates back to the mid-sixteenth century, when it was painted on the walls of a room in Daisen'in 大仙院 by Kano Yukinobu 狩野之信 (active mid-sixteenth century). It is useful to take a moment here to outline the history of the genre as it impacts the production and reception of Ōshin's *gozanoma* and *ōhiroma* paintings.

Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons Painting Programs: An Historical Overview

Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons paintings appear on the walls and on folding screens in the possession of temples, convents, and residences of the military aristocracy and imperial family originating in the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century. The painting subject developed from elements of two genres of painting in Japan: *kōshoku zu* (耕織図; Ch. *gengzhi tu*), pictures of farming and sericulture, introduced from China in the fifteenth century; and paintings depicting chronological events popular during the Heian period (794-1185), known as four-season paintings (*shiki-e* 四季絵) and paintings of activities of the twelve months (*tsukinami-e* 月次絵).²¹⁶ The natural progression of time and agricultural cycle made it suitable for multi-scene, large-scale projects of room decoration, while the content contained religious, ethical, and cultural significance.

Pictures of farming and sericulture originally developed in China during the Southern Song period (1127-1279), and early pictures were didactic and cosmological in nature. The detailed labor of farming extolled to emperors the virtues of hard work.²¹⁷ In this way, *gengzhi tu* (pictures of farming and sericulture) in China belonged to the painting genre of *quanjie tu* 劝

²¹⁵ Sasaki, "Edo jidai ni okeru Chūgoku kaiga shisō no juyō to tenkai," 38. The organization of space in a painting to reflect a foreground, middle ground, and background dates back to early landscapes in China and were a standard formulation in Japanese landscape painting as well. Kano Tan'yū also successfully integrated gold clouds and blank space into his compositions to achieve a perspective of space. On this subject, see Kihara Toshie, *Yūbi no tankyū: Kanō Tan'yū ron* (Suita: Ōsaka Daigaku Shuppankai, 1998).

²¹⁶ Reizei Tamehito et al., *Mizuho no kuni Nihon: Shiki kōsaku zu no sekai* [Japan, land of abundant rice: the world of pictures of rice cultivation in four seasons] (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1996), 4-7.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 4. See also, Francesca Bray, "Images of Rice in Imperial Chinese Culture," in Roy Hamilton, *The Art of Rice: Spirit and Sustenance in Asia* (Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 2003), 433.

戒图 (Jp. *kankai zu* 勸戒図), or pictures of advice and admonishment. As a didactic tool, pictures of advice and admonishment were based on the Confucian principle of virtue and were painted to show viewers either proper behavior to emulate or improper action to avoid. *Gengzhi tu* depicted both rice cultivation, which was typically men's work, and sericulture, which was overseen by women. Since both food and clothing were essential to the well-being of people and were, additionally, used to pay taxes, *gengzhi tu* illustrated the production of fundamental social necessities. Furthermore, the equal balance of work emphasized the cosmological harmony, or *yin-yang* balance, between men and women.²¹⁸ Women's role in raising silkworms and making silk as depicted in half of the motifs in *gengzhi tu* was not translated into Japanese paintings of farming, as Japan in the sixteenth century did not maintain a sericulture industry as existed in China. Instead, Japanese paintings focused on the virtue of hard work through rice cultivation. Women were still represented in Rice Cultivation pictures in Japan, however, and the significance of their inclusion will be discussed below.

Daisen'in: An Early Example of Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons

One of the earliest examples of *Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons* on *shōhekiga* in Japan is at Daisen'in 大仙院, a subtemple of Daitokuji 大徳寺, in Kyoto, painted by Kano Yukinobu.²¹⁹ (Fig. 2.9) The painting program on the walls of the *Rei no ma* 礼之間 (the abbot's room) is said to have been based on the farming scenes from a handscroll by Sōami 相阿弥 (d. 1525) which was, in turn, a copy of a handscroll of *Rice Cultivation and Sericulture* by the Chinese painter, Liang Kai 梁楷 (Jp. Ryōkai; active early thirteenth century) which entered Japan in the fourteenth century.²²⁰ The painting program of *shiki kōsaku* occupied eight contiguous panels on the north and west walls of the *rei no ma*. The scenes included on the four panels on the north wall from west to east were of submerging rice seeds (*tanemomi o hitasu* 種糶浸す), plowing, and transplanting rice seedlings; the west wall from south to north depicted irrigation, weeding, harvesting, polishing, and storing rice.²²¹ The seasons were thus represented clockwise starting with spring on the north wall corner, then crossing over the undecorated walls to the south side of the west wall for summer and moving north to depict

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Daisen'in was founded in 1513 by Kogaku Sōkō 古嶽宗亘 (1465-1548), a disciple of Jitsuden Sōshin 実伝宗真 (1434-1507).

²²⁰ A Kano school copy of the Liang Kai handscroll is kept in the Tokyo National Museum. Tsuji Nobuo, "Kano Motonobu, Part Three," *Bijutsu Kenkyū* 270 (July, 1970): 47. See also Reizei et al., *Mizuho no kuni*, 16-17.

²²¹ Tsuji, "Kano Motonobu," 46-47.

autumn. Art historian Ogawa Hiromitsu found in a study of the wall paintings in each room of the Daisen'in *hōjō* that the organization of the panels in the *rei no ma* followed a precedent set in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) in which paintings of the four seasons matched the seasons to the four directions. In this scheme, spring was depicted in the east, summer was represented in the south, autumn on the west, and winter in the north, for a clockwise seasonal progression.²²² The correspondence of season (or the passage of time) to direction (or space) related to the Chinese cosmological principle of *yin-yang wu-xing* 陰陽五行 (Jp. *inyō gogyō*), or “negative and positive forces” and “the five elements of nature.”²²³ In the *hōjō* at Daisen'in, each room displayed varying degrees of adherence to the season/direction paradigm. Ogawa found the correspondence of the seasons with cardinal directions depended on the function of the room as an official, semi-official, quasi-official, or private space. The most public, “formal” room of the *hōjō*, the *shitchū*, depicted the four seasons on the west, north, and east walls. Despite the lack of decoration on the south wall, the progression of the seasons followed the directions as described in Chinese geomancy. Likewise, the other “formal” room on the south side of the *hōjō*, the *danna no ma* 檀那の間 (Patron's Room), has seasons depicted on the east and north walls. The seasons also progress clockwise around the decorated space. The correspondence to the geomantic principles of the directions and the progression of time (season) in the official rooms is contrasted by the two rooms on the north side of the *hōjō*, which are decorated with Chan Patriarchs and Daoist Immortals. These rooms had private functions as a room for the training of disciples and as the living space of the chief priest, and there was no seasonal progression or attempt to relate season to direction in these spaces.

At Hōkyōji, the wall paintings on the *gozanoma* and *ōhiroma* do not seem to follow the same principles of time and space progression as the *rei no ma* in Daisen'in. The season of spring is represented on the west wall of the *gozanoma*, while summer occupies the south wall. Autumn and winter are represented on the north and west walls of the *ōhiroma*. Numerous

²²² Ogawa Hiromitsu, “Daisen'in *hōjō* fusuma-e kō (jō): *hōjō* fusuma-e zentai keikaku to tōyō shōheki-gashi ni shimeru sono shiteki ichi (1)” [Thoughts on the pictures on sliding door panels in the Abbot's Quarters of Daisen'in: (Part One): the overall plan of pictures on sliding door panels in the Abbot's Quarters and their historical position in the history of East Asian wall paintings (1)], *Kokka* 1120 (1989): 17.

²²³ Ogawa Hiromitsu, “Daisen'in *hōjō* fusuma-e kō (chū): *hōjō* fusuma-e zentai keikaku to tōyō shōheki-gashi ni shimeru sono shiteki ichi (1)” [Thoughts on the pictures on sliding door panels in the Abbot's Quarters of Daisen'in: (Part Two): the overall plan of pictures on sliding door panels in the Abbot's Quarters and their historical position in the history of East Asian wall paintings (1)], *Kokka* 1121 (1989): 33.

factors may account for the deviance from the geomantic principle of *wu-xing*. The two-room program with the eastern side of the room left undecorated (due to *shōji* that opened to the veranda) leaves only the west and south walls in one room and north and west walls in another room available for paintings. Moreover, as Ogawa points out, Daisen'in held a unique position in East Asian painting because it was one of the last comprehensive painting program that conformed to the principles of *yin-yang wu-xing* in Japanese temple decoration. The timing of the construction of Daisen'in was a critical factor in the subject matter and composition of the paintings in the *hōjō*. By the eighteenth century, the correspondence between season and direction had become less strict in room decoration.

The lessening importance of *yin-yang* principles in room decoration may have been partly due to an overall decline in the presence of *yin-yang* masters (*onmyōji* 陰陽師) at court during the sixteenth century. During the warring periods, the two families who had been in charge of cosmology at the Japanese court, the Kamo 賀茂 and the Tsuchimikado 土御門, were mostly silenced as the Kamo family line ended, and the Tsuchimikado left for the provinces due to the declining fortunes of the imperial court they served.²²⁴ In the post-Sengoku period, *onmyōji* from the Tsuchimikado family resumed the important role of the creation of the calendar and the divination of auspicious dates. A group of documents kept at the convent by Abbess Rihō in the years leading to her retirement in 1733 related to the divination of auspicious dates regarding important events for Rihō's successor, Richō.²²⁵ The eight documents, all entitled "Onyō no kami Abe no Yasukuni Nichiji Kanbun" [Divination of the date and time by the head of the Bureau of Yin and Yang, Abe no Yasukuni] dated between the eleventh month of 1725 and the eighth month of 1731, are kept in the Hōkyōji archives.²²⁶ The dates of the documents correspond to the birth of the princess who would succeed Rihō and certain significant dates in her early life, such as the day she entered the convent (*nyūji* 入寺) and began religious training (*kasshiki* 喝食).²²⁷ The earliest document kept at Hōkyōji,

²²⁴ Lee Butler, "The Way of Yin and Yang: A Tradition Revived, Sold, Adopted," *Monumenta Nipponica* 51, no. 2 (Summer, 1996): 193.

²²⁵ Rihō was known as Hongakuin no miya after her retirement. Her life and art will be discussed in the next chapter.

²²⁶ Abe no Yasukuni 安倍泰邦, also known as Tsuchimikado Yasukuni, was the twenty-first generation head of the Bureau of Yin and Yang (*onyō no kami* 陰陽頭). *Nihon rekishi daijiten* 1, 159.

²²⁷ Richō's childhood name was Kakyū no miya 嘉久宮. She was the fourth daughter of Emperor Nakamikado 中御門天皇 (1701-1737; r. (1710)-1735) and Shimizutani Iwako 清水谷石子 (1703-1735). She was promised to succeed Rihō as abbess of Hōkyōji at birth, which

from the fifth day of the eleventh month of Kyōhō 10 (1725), marked the date and hour (the hour of the dragon, *tatsuji* 辰時 (between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m.)) of the princess' birth. The latest request was for divination of an auspicious day for the princess to be ordained (*tokudō* 得道). Although the documents regarding the divination of auspicious dates are limited to these, and all were initiated by Rihō as perhaps a way to safeguard the early years of her successor, they importantly show that cosmology was practiced at the convent in the early 1700s.

While *onmyōdo* may have practiced at the convent, it is unclear to what extent it factored into the selection of subject matter for the Hōkyōji *shoin* in the late eighteenth century. While the *Rice Cultivation* panels did display four seasons, they were not arranged, as in the *rei no ma* at Daisen'in, in a manner corresponding to the four cardinal directions as practiced in Chinese geomancy. Rather than a strict representation of geomancy, the cosmology of the four seasons and the directions in paintings of the four seasons may have been understood at some level through practice of *onmyōdō* and through viewing extant examples.

Other features of the Rice Cultivation theme may have impacted the significance of the theme for the women at Hōkyōji. We can look again at the historical precedent of the Daisen'in *Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons* for other clues to its selection as a painting theme. The *rei no ma* paintings in the Daisen'in *hōjō* joined other Chinese-borrowed themes in its south-facing rooms. From west to east, the three south-facing rooms' painting programs were *Birds and Flowers of the Four Seasons* by Kano Motonobu 狩野元信 (1476-1559) in the *danna no ma*, *Landscape in Four Seasons* painted by Sōami in the *shitchū* 室中 (central room), and Yukinobu's *Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons*. The Abbot's Room was thought to have functioned as a waiting room for a person who was waiting to conduct a ceremony in the *shitchū*.²²⁸ While not a formal space, per se, it had an important function as a space for a high-ranking occupant. Placed alongside the other themes inspired by the mainland suggests Rice Cultivation was also considered a "Chinese" theme with didactic overtones. It should be remembered that the paintings originated in the Southern Song period in China as didactic material as well.

explains why Rihō was able to monitor and influence early ceremonies during the first six years of her life before she entered the convent. On the significance of Rihō's entry into Hōkyōji and Rihō's activities regarding the succession, see Oka Yoshiko, "Nōsho, Hōkyōji Tokugon Rihō to Ōmi Zenryūji" [Excellent calligraphy: Tokugon Rihō of Hōkyōji and Zenryūji in Ōmi], in *Nihon no shūkyō to jendā ni kansuru kokusai sōgō kenkyū*, 47-65. I am grateful to Patricia Fister for bringing this source to my attention. See also Nishiguchi, "Kinsei no Hōkyōji no miya," 519-537.

²²⁸ Ogawa, "Daisen'in hōjō fusuma-e kō (chū)," 38.

The reception rooms at Hōkyōji where *Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons* was painted were also formal spaces, as the public areas at the convent, although the function of the rooms was different from that of the Abbot's Room. The presence of the paintings in both the temple and convent suggest the painting theme was suitable for formal spaces, following the precedent for painting Chinese themes in formal rooms. In the Daisen'in *hōjō*, the Chinese-themed paintings followed precedents of advice paintings; the lessons of the virtue of hard work and the resulting reward of abundance. By the eighteenth century, the lesson may have been internalized through viewing the numerous examples of Rice Cultivation paintings seen in temples, aristocratic and imperial residences. The enduring lesson of reward through hard work, the painting precedents on which it drew, and the ease with which the Rice Cultivation theme lent itself to representation over large areas are all viable factors that explain why the painting theme might have been suitable for display in an imperial Buddhist convent. Questions still remain, however, about the special significance of the theme to women. Another look at the *Rice Cultivation in Four Season* paintings at Hōkyōji is warranted to examine the relationship between gender and *shōhekiga* choice in spaces designed for women.

Reading Gender in the *Shōhekiga* at Hōkyōji

There are numerous reasons – didactic, religious, and aesthetic – why the Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons theme might be appropriate for the walls of Hōkyōji as a gendered subject. In general, inherent nature references relate to the maternal role of women. The arc of birth, fruition, and death echoes life; the cyclical nature of the seasons against which the cultivation scenes are laid out are appropriate as rough illustration of birth and fertility. The reference to nature, however, does not account for the farming scenes, which are equally important to consider as gendered. In farming, we may also glimpse aspects of the theme that speak to women.

In the *Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons* paintings at Hōkyōji there is a recurring motif that can be easily overlooked. The motif is of women working alongside male farmers, completing the seasonal duties of rice cultivation. They are so fully integrated into the scenes it is easy to imagine the figures are male unless one looks closely at the details. On the fourth panel of the west wall of the *gozanoma*, women and children collect spring flowers. The second panel from the west on the south side of *gozanoma* depicts women and women transplanting rice seedlings into the fields. On the second panel from the east in the *ōhiroma* two men and a woman thresh rice while another woman carrying a baby and a child watch them. The next panel to the west illustrates the act of polishing the rice, with four women and one man operating the mill together. (Fig. 2.10) Behind the building where the group works, another woman winnows the chaff from rice.

The presence of women performing work alongside men suggests two different possibilities of production. The many women in the painting suggest farming was inclusive; rather than being a male domain, it could be seen as one belonging to women, too. In this way farming is suggestive of a community effort. Women were known to have worked on family farms during the early modern period; it may not have been unusual to see women in the fields.²²⁹ Ōshin may have observed women actually working alongside men in the fields and incorporated them into his composition.

Another possibility refers back to the original *gengzhi tu* (agriculture and sericulture paintings) from China, which were balanced cosmologically by the two modes of production — agriculture, undertaken by men, and sericulture, overseen by women. In cosmological terms, harmony is attained through the balance of negative (female) and positive (male) forces. In Japan only the agriculture feature of the *gengzhi tu* was illustrated to become *shiki kōsaku*. The inclusion of women in the Hōkyōji wall paintings, however, may have compensated for the lack of a sericulture component to the didactic painting. The closest example of a *gengzhi tu* in Japan is the Daisen'in wall paintings, which, it can be remembered, are thought to have been based on the agricultural component of a *gengzhi tu* painted by Liang Kai. The Daisen'in *rei no ma* paintings depict only men at work in the fields; the women would have appeared in the sericulture scenes. The painting theme at Hōkyōji thus retains its didactic message of the virtue of hard work for both men and women. Both possibilities make the painting theme suitable for decoration of elite women's reception rooms, and they are not mutually exclusive. The didactic aspect of the painting theme is worth exploring, since the Confucian overtones inherent in the theme may have resonated with the leaders – the abbesses – of the convent.

Didactic Readings of Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons and their Gendered Implications

By the Edo period, the theme of Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons was further informed by the neo-Confucian leanings of Tokugawa officials and intellectuals.²³⁰ The division of Edo period society into four distinct classes is a well-known strategy of the Tokugawa bakufu to control and organize Japanese society with neo-Confucian ideology. People were divided into

²²⁹ Thomas Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959), 28, f.n. 2. See also Conrad Totman, *Early Modern Japan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 248.

²³⁰ On the Tokugawa bakufu's complicated relationship and adoption of neo-Confucian principles in the early Edo period, see Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570-1680* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

a hierarchy of four classes that included, from the most revered to the least, samurai, peasants, artisans, and merchants. While the reality of the political, social, and cultural power wielded by the classes belied the ranking, the rhetorical valorization of peasants as the second most important members of society indicates acknowledgement of their important contribution to the economy, as well as a degree of romanticization of farmwork and farmers in the Edo period. In the *Rice Cultivation* painting program, the reality of the peasants' harsh lives was downplayed to promote the successful and idyllic production of rice.

Interest in agriculture and the Confucian appropriation of that subject occupied rulers and intellectuals throughout the Edo period as the bakufu tried to extract the greatest possible agricultural yield from arable, forest, and riparian resources against natural disasters and growing peasant unrest. Part of the agriculture program included the exhortation for individuals to work harder and to more efficiently utilize labor.²³¹ This connection between farming and neo-Confucian principles is explicated in the writings of a village leader from the Kishu domain:

If a man is foolish and brings his family to ruin, he commits a crime against his parents that will last generations. But if the lessons of hard work and good farming are not forgotten, a man's conduct will conform to Heaven's way, and he will achieve the greatest filial piety.²³²

An intellectual distance exists, however, from such agricultural treatises to the texts used in the education of imperial Buddhist nuns. Buddhist nuns had access to a wide range of books; a partial inventory of the books in the Hōkyōji collection lists over forty books related to Confucianism, including volumes of the *Shiso gokyō* (the Four Books and Five Classics), which constitute the main teachings of Confucianism.²³³ As part of their education, abbesses studied the Confucian classics.²³⁴

²³¹ Totman, *Early Modern Japan*, 262-263.

²³² Ōbata Saizō, "Ōbata Saizoki," 411, quoted in Thomas C. Smith, *Nakahara* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 108.

²³³ The Four Books include *The Analects of Confucius* 論語 (Ch. *Lunyu*; Jp. *Rongo*), *The Great Learning* 大學 (Ch. *Daxue*; Jp. *Daigaku*), *The Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸 (Ch. *Zhongyong*; Jp. *Chūyō*), and *The Mencius* 孟子 (Ch. *Mengzi*; Jp. *Mōshi*). The Five Classics are the *Classic of Changes* 易經 (Ch. *Yijing*; Jp. *Ekikyō*), the *Classic of Rites* 禮記 (Ch. *Liji*; Jp. *Raiki*), the *Classic of Poetry* 詩經 (Ch. *Shijing*; Jp. *Shikyō*), the *Classic of History* 書經 (Ch. *Shujing*; Jp. *Shokyō*), and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋 (Ch. *Chunqiu*; Jp. *Shunjū*). *Hōkyōji tenseki*

Didactic texts were adapted from Chinese texts and reissued and reformulated by Japanese authors in the Edo period. In addition to classic Confucian texts, the most accessible way to learn about Confucian principles in the Edo period was through didactic texts imported from China and reissued and reformulated by Japanese authors in the Edo period. Didactic texts such as *Retsujoden* 烈女伝 [Biographies of exemplary women], *Ko retsujoden* 古烈女伝 [Biographies of exemplary women of the past], *Onna shikimoku* 女式目 [Rules for women], *Onna daigaku* 女大学 [Greater learning for women], and the compendium of four moral treatises entitled *Onna shisho* 女四書 [Four books for women], offered moral rules of conduct for women. Moral guides were first models of behavior and education material for members of the aristocracy, then women from the families of military rulers. By the end of the Edo period, as education became more widespread, didactic texts written for women filtered down to the merchant and peasant classes as well.

Notably, some didactic texts for women contain images of *Rice Cultivation in the Four Seasons*. The revised edition of Kaibara Ekken's *Onna daigaku*, entitled *Onna daigaku takarabako* 女大学宝箱 [Greater learning for women treasure chest] (1733) included two scenes of farming on its opening page.²³⁵ *Onna daigaku oshie kagami* [Greater learning for women teaching mirror] (1842), also contained a farming painting. The inclusion of *Rice Cultivation* illustrations in these didactic texts suggests *shiki kōsaku zu* were seen as visual representations of upstanding behavior for women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It remained an example of *kankai zu* with significance for women across different social strata.

The inventory of books at Hōkyōji does not list Japanese didactic texts for women, but the addition of the illustrations of *Rice Cultivation* suggests a general trend of interpretation of advice and admonishment in the eighteenth century that draws on Neo-Confucian ideology as well as cosmology. The examples of some possible readings of the Rice Cultivation theme indicate that it is, indeed, suitable for both elite men and women. Moreover, the presence of the theme in a convent draws on gendered interpretations also inherent in the Hōkyōji painting

ichiran [A list of books at Hōkyōji], an unpublished report on a survey conducted December, 1994 by researchers at the Institute of Medieval Japanese Studies, New York, NY. I am grateful to the Institute of Medieval Japanese Studies at Columbia University, headed by Dr. Barbara Ruch, for granting me access to their surveys and initial studies of the Imperial Convent Project in 2003, from which this source comes.

²³⁴ Kasanoin Hirota, "Daishōji Monzeki Kasanoin Jikun Obasama no koto," in *Ayamegusa nikki: Otera no goshō Daishōji Monzeki Kasanoin Jikunnikō* [In iris fields: remembrances and poetry] by Kasanoin Jikun (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 2009), 14.

²³⁵ Reizei et al., *Mizuho no kuni*, 80.

program, notably the community of men and women, equal division of labor, and the virtue of hard work. A final exploration of the theme questions the importance of the location of it in imperial Buddhist convents. In addition to *why* the painting theme may have been chosen for the *shoin* at Hōkyōji, other questions that may be asked are *where* do the farming paintings appear and is their location within the convent important? Did gender play a part in the selection and placement of paintings within the convent?

Omote and Oku: Painting Themes on Public and Private Spaces in Imperial Buddhist Convents

Reikanji, an imperial Buddhist convent founded in the seventeenth century, also has a painting program of *Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons* on the walls of one of the north rooms of its *oku shoin* 奥書院, the inner, private residential area used for daily activities at the convent. (Fig. 2.11) The *oku shoin* consists of two rooms which lay to the north of the three rooms of the *omote shoin* 表書院 (Front Reception Hall), resulting in a long *shoin* of five rooms running north-south to the front garden. The *fusuma* paintings in the *oku shoin* include *Waterfall* (*Takisansui-zu* 滝山水図), *Viewing Maple Leaves* (*Momiji-zu* 紅葉図), *Hunting with Hawks* (*Takagari-zu* 鷹狩図), and *Rice Cultivation in the Four Seasons*.²³⁶ The *oku shoin* was built later than the *omote shoin* and was completed in 1818; the farming paintings date to the time of the construction.²³⁷

The appearance of *Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons* on the two largest rooms suggests those rooms were used for the reception of guests, in other words, “public” rooms. The distinction between public reception rooms and private residential rooms is not clearly set forth in records pertaining to Hōkyōji’s *shoin*; how they may have been used can only be gleaned from their name and architectural design. The *ōhiroma*, the largest room in the *shoin*, has fifteen tatami mats, and the *gozanoma* has ten tatami mats.²³⁸ The continuous painting program of *Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons* on the walls of both rooms suggests they sometimes may

²³⁶ The *fusuma* paintings in the *omote shoin* include *Chinese Women and Children at Play*, *Birds and Flowers*, *Chinese Immortals*, and *The Four Accomplishments*. See Furuta, “Reikanji shoin shōhekiga ni tsuite,” 341. *Chinese Women and Children at Play* will be discussed in detail below.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ The size of tatami mats in Kyoto had the standard size of 6 *shaku* 3 *sun*, or 191 cm x 3 *shaku* 1 *sun* 5 *bu* (95 cm), with an area of 19.85 square *shaku* (1.82 m²). A *shaku* is approximately 30.3 cm, a *sun* is 1/10 of a *shaku* (30.3 mm), and a *bu* is 1/100 of a *shaku* (3.03 mm). Satō Osamu, “A History of Tatami,” *Chanoyu Quarterly* 77 (1994): 17.

have been used together. With doors slid open between them, the general arc of seasonal change and agricultural cycle would still be recognizable and complete.

While the designation of public and private spaces at Hōkyōji is not clearly made in either the names of the rooms or in historical documents kept at the convent, a distinction was made between public and private spaces to accommodate formal and informal visitors. Diary entries from the first month of 1660 in the convent diary, *Hōkyōji on'nikki* 宝鏡寺御日記, recorded when Richū was abbess, show that visitors to the convent were received in the *shoin* in either the *omote* or *naigi* 内儀, a term which was used to indicate the *oku*.²³⁹ In an entry from the eighth day of the first month of 1660, the diary records a visit from Seikanji Tomofusa 清閑寺共房 (1589-1661), Minister of the Center, Junior First Rank, and a liaison between the court and the Shogunate (*buke tensō* 武家伝奏), who came to pay his respects for the new year. On this day, Tomofusa was received in the *omote* and was served a light meal and sake. Given his high rank and his position as liaison to the Edo bakufu, Tomofusa was received formally in the *shoin*. Other visitors of lower social status than the abbess were also received in the *ōhiroma*, but the abbess would receive them from the *gozanoma* behind a screen. An entry in the *Hōkyōji on'nikki* from the fifth day of the first month of 1660 records a visit from local townspeople: “As is customary, the peasants from the land under Hōkyōji’s jurisprudence came to give New Year’s greetings. The abbess received them from behind a curtain.” In contrast, family members and close associates were received more informally in the inner rooms of the *shoin*. An entry from the same diary on the third day of the first month records a new year’s visit from the abbess and founder of Reikanji, Sōchō.²⁴⁰ Half-sister to Richū and a social equal as abbess of Reikanji, Sōchō was received in the *naigi* of the *shoin*. Unfortunately, the diary does not specify which rooms were considered the *naigi* in the entry; it is quite possible informal visitors could have been received in different rooms on different occasions. The distinction in the diary of public and private spaces, however, indicates the nuns at Hōkyōji had an understanding among themselves of what constituted a public or private space and suggests visitors were received according to the purpose of their visits (official or informal) as well as their ranks and relationship to the abbess.²⁴¹

²³⁹ Inokuchi, *Nimonzeki no gengo seikatsu*, n. 79, 422. *Hōkyōji on'nikki* is in the possession of Hōkyōji and was transcribed by Inokuchi Yūichi in *Nimonzeki no gengo seikatsu no chōsa kenkyū*, 421-432.

²⁴⁰ Sōchō was born two years before Richū in 1639 and died in 1678 at the age of forty. Her birth name was Tari no miya, and she is referred to in the diary as Tani no tsushima.

²⁴¹ During the Tokugawa rule, residences for the military elite had fixed public and private reception spaces labeled as “*omote*” and “*oku*,” most notably in Edo Castle, which had an

The division in paintings, too, suggest a difference in the status of rooms in Hōkyōji's *shoin*. The *gozanoma* and *ōhiroma*, it will be remembered, were painted by Ōshin, the grandson of Maruyama Ōkyo. The other rooms were all painted by Yoshimura Kōkei, a student of Maruyama Ōkyo. The choice of very different subject matter (*Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons*) for the two largest rooms by Ōshin and various animals for the other rooms suggests a loose thematic division of the spaces. Art historian Keiko Nakamachi studied the choice of *shōhekiga* subjects at the Kyoto Imperial Palace and at Edo Castle during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and found that, in 1838 and 1844, wall paintings with scenes from *The Tale of Genji* were limited to the *ōoku* (Great Interior) of Edo Castle while the public spaces had images of Chinese figures or Birds and Flowers.²⁴² In the imperial palace reconstructions of the *Kogosho* 小御所 during the Kanbun era (1661-1673) and the *Tsunegoten* 常御殿 during the Hōei era (1704-1711), however, paintings of scenes from *The Tale of Genji* and other *monogatari* 物語 (narrative tale) were used in all the rooms, indicating the theme was suitable for both public and private spaces in these palaces. Nakamachi concludes that there was a clear separation between public and private spaces at Edo Castle, while the division was not as fixed for imperial palaces.²⁴³ At Hōkyōji, too, there is no nominal division between *omote* and *oku* in the *shoin* spaces. Yet, as seen in the Hōkyōji diary excerpted above, there was a distinction between public and private spaces as understood by the women who lived there. The choice of the Rice Cultivation in Four Season theme at Hōkyōji raises similar questions about the meaning of public or private space in the *shoin*.

At Reikanji, which had a clear *omote shoin* and *oku shoin*, the *Rice Cultivation* program occupies one room used daily by the nuns in the *oku shoin*, the *ni no ma*. (Fig. 2.12) The presence of the paintings falls in line with the interest in the theme at other imperial Buddhist convents. The *Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons* paintings in the *ni no ma* of the *oku shoin* appear on the north, east, and south sides. In addition to the farming program in the *ni no ma*,

ōhiroma for public receptions and the *ōoku* 大奥, the most private quarters of the castle, which were mainly for the residences of women who lived at the castle. On the demarcation and functions of public and private spaces in Edo Castle, see See Anna Beerens, "Interview with Two Ladies from the Oku: A Translation from Kyūji Shimonroku," *Monumenta Nipponica* 62, no. 2 (Autumn, 2008): 265-324; and Hata Hisako, "Servants of the Inner Quarters: The Women of the Shogun's Great Interior," in *Servants of the Dynasty: Palace Women in World History*, ed. Anne Walthall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 174.

²⁴² Keiko Nakamachi, "Genji Pictures from Momoyama Painting to Edo *Ukiyo-e*," in *Envisioning the Tale of Genji*, 177.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 178.

the *ichi no ma* of the *oku shoin* has a tokonoma with a painting of a waterfall and paintings on four panels on its east wall of *Maple Leaves* (Fig. 2.13) and four panels on its south side of *Hunting with Hawks*.²⁴⁴ (Fig. 2.14)

Starting on the north wall of the *ni no ma* and continuing to the west and then south, scenes of preparing fields, plowing, planting sprouts, irrigating, harvesting, drying, polishing, and storing rice in straw bags are represented among seasonal markers. (Fig. 2.15) A flowering cherry tree is nestled among dynamically inclining pines on the third panel from the east on the north wall; (Fig. 2.16) a maple tree with red leaves is the sole splash of color on the one decorated panel on the east wall. (Fig. 2.17) The rest of the paintings are executed in ink and light colors of green and brown. The elements of agriculture and nature, while detailed, occupy mainly the bottom half of the registers with stretches of lightly rendered fields or briefly defined distant mountains. The effect is one of emptiness and distance; while activity is almost constant in the scenes, the atmosphere is muted and calm.

The artist who painted the farming scenes on the sliding door panels in the inner *shoin* was Okamoto Toyohiko 岡本豊彦 (1773-1845), a disciple of Matsumura Goshun 松村呉春 (1752-1811), who painted a *Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons* painting program at Nishi Honganji. (Fig. 2.18) Diverging from Goshun, who painted his rice cultivation scenes at Nishi Honganji with an eye to the Chinese copy books, Toyohiko included Japanese architecture, tools, and native vegetation in his paintings to exact the Japanese farming experience.²⁴⁵ (Fig. 2.19) Motifs fill the lower half of the sliding door panels and include scenes from the beginning of seed planting to harvesting, threshing, drying, and taking the rice to the storehouse.

The *ni no ma* program bears similarities to that in Hōkyōji's *shoin*. While Hōkyōji's paintings cover eighteen panels in two rooms and Reikanji's paintings fill thirteen panels in one room, both offer detailed descriptions of aspects of rice cultivation among seasonal motifs. Architectural structures are used to anchor the composition and provide a framework for the activity shown by the figures.

The *shiki kōsaku* paintings in Hōkyōji and Reikanji are more different than they are alike, however. While they were executed around the same time, the position and scale of the painting theme in the public (*omote*) reception rooms of Hōkyōji and one of the inner rooms (*oku*) of the Reikanji *shoin* suggest the painting theme was suitable for rooms with seemingly

²⁴⁴ For an overall list of the painting subjects on the *shōhekiga* in the *omote* and *oku shoin* at Reikanji, see Furuta, "Reikanji: Shoin shōhekiga ni tsuite," 341-343.

²⁴⁵ Sanekata Yōko, "Kyōto fusuma-e saikenki 9: Reikanji" [A detailed look at paintings on sliding door panels in Kyoto 9: Reikanji], *Chadō zasshi* 3 (2005): 113-114.

very different functions. It also suggests the location was not as important a consideration as the presence of the theme itself within the convent.

The *Omote Shoin* at Reikanji: A Comparative Study

Wall paintings with a gendered theme is thus seen to be complex, especially in the case of a painting theme that is used to great effect in residences and temple buildings for both men and women. There are examples of painting themes, however, that are specifically and overtly gendered female in early modern residences for elite women. Indeed, the choice to adorn rooms used daily by nuns with *Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons* in the *oku shoin* at Reikanji may be partly due to the painting program already chosen for the *omote shoin*, the subject of which raises further questions about gender and convent architecture. Today the *omote shoin* is the most widely known building at Reikanji. Open twice yearly for public viewing, its brightly-decorated *fusuma-e* of vibrant pigments on a gold-leaf background (a style known as *kinpekiga* 金壁画) depicting *Chinese Women and Children at Play* (*Kanjo karako asobi* 官女唐子遊) and *Seasonal Flowers and Trees*, along with the lower and upper camellia gardens on its grounds, draw thousands of tourists from around the country.

A Historical Overview of Reikanji

Reikanji was founded through the auspices of Go-mizunoo by his twelfth daughter, Sōchō 宗澄 (1639-1678) in 1654.²⁴⁶ In 1679 (Empō 7), Emperor Go-sai's daughter Sen no miya (選宮) became abbess and took the name Kōzan Sōei 光山宗榮 (1658-1721).²⁴⁷ Emperor Go-sai constructed a new palace in 1675, and when he died the rest pavilion (*gosokusho* 御休息所), guards' building (*gobansho* 御番所), and the entrance gallery (*genkan* 玄関) were donated to Reikanji from the previous palace.²⁴⁸ The buildings were brought to the convent in 1686, the year after Go-sai's death. At the time the rest pavilion was moved it was used as a guest hall (*kyakuden* 客殿), but now it is the *omote shoin*.²⁴⁹ (Fig. 2.20) When Go-sai's palace buildings were incorporated into Reikanji, the convent moved to its current

²⁴⁶ The full name of the convent is Enjōzan Reikanji 円成山靈鑑寺.

²⁴⁷ Her mother was Higashi Sanjō no Tsubone Tomoko 東三条局共子 (d. 1695), the daughter of Major Councillor Seikanji Tomotsuna 清閑寺大納言共綱 (1612-1675).

²⁴⁸ Other buildings from Go-sai's temple moved to Hōzen'in 法然院 and Kanjūji 勧修寺. Okamura Yoshiji et al., ed., *Tani no gosho Reikanji* (Kyoto: Reikanji, 1997). I am grateful to Patricia Fister for bringing this source to my attention.

²⁴⁹ Okamura, *Tani no gosho Reikanji*. Also, Kyōtofu Bunkazai Hogokikin, *Kyōto no Edo jidai shōhekiga* (Kyoto: Kyōtofu Bunkazai Hogokikin, 1978), 145.

location in Kyoto's Sakyō 左京 ward. The *oku shoin* was added later, in 1818, at which time the designation of *omote* and *oku* was most likely added to the buildings to distinguish them.

Unlike Hōkyōji, whose main buildings are joined by hallways surrounding an inner courtyard, Reikanji's *shoin* and *kuri* are separated from the *hondō* by a garden pathway. The *hondō* sits at the top of a hill, connected by a covered outdoor path, and garden paths snake around the upper and lower slopes of the convent compound between the upper and lower buildings. (Fig. 2.21) Aside from having the *shoin* and the *genkan* added to the existing *hondō* (moved from its original location) in 1687, Reikanji underwent some major reconstructions in the Edo period. The front gate (*omote mon* 表門) was constructed in 1752,²⁵⁰ and the *hondō* was rebuilt in 1795. According to the plaque on the ridge of the *hondō*, the abbess at the time the *hondō* was constructed was Sōkyō 宗恭 (1769-1821).²⁵¹ She was engaged to Tokugawa Iemoto 徳川家基 (1762-1779), the son of the then-ruling tenth shogun, Tokugawa Ieharu 徳川家治 (1737-1786). When Iemoto died suddenly in 1779, Sōkyō took the tonsure and entered Reikanji.²⁵² The Tokugawa shogun Ienari 徳川家斉 (1773–1841; r. 1787–1837) donated money to repair the *hondō* on the thirteenth anniversary of Iemoto's death (1791) to pray for the repose of his soul.²⁵³

The *Omote Shoin* at Reikanji

The three rooms of the *omote shoin*, the upper room (*jōdan no ma* 上段の間), second room (*ni no ma* 二の間), and third room (*san no ma* 三の間), which front the south garden, display two different painting programs of *Chinese Women and Children at Play* and *Seasonal Flowers and Trees*. (Fig. 2.22) A typical feature of a *shoin-zukuri* residential architectural style, the upper, second, and third rooms are “stepped,” so that the floor of the upper room is physically higher than the lower rooms.²⁵⁴ Reserved for the highest-ranked occupant of the room, the raised platform of the upper room creates a physical and psychological hierarchy

²⁵⁰ Okamura, *Tani no gosho Reikanji*.

²⁵¹ Her birth name was Kan'in no miya 閑院宮. She was the daughter of Prince Kan'in Sukehito 閑院宮典仁親王 (1733-1794) and the younger sister of the Kōkaku emperor (光格天皇 1771-1840; r. 1780-1817).

²⁵² Sōkyō was adopted by Go-momozono in the fourth month of the 1789 and entered Reikanji four months later in the eighth month of 1789.

²⁵³ Okamura, *Tani no gosho Reikanji*.

²⁵⁴ The lower rooms of a *shoin-zukuri* building are also known as the middle room (中段の間 *chūdan (no ma)*) and the lower room (下段の間 *gedan (no ma)*), but at Reikanji they are known as the second room (*ni no ma*) and the third room (*san no ma*), respectively.

between the room's main occupant and visitors. Furthermore, when sliding doors of the rooms are opened between the three rooms, the person(s) seated on the platform is (are) literally framed by the gold-leafed decorations on the room separators, further removing them from the lower space.

The north wall of the upper room, the *jōdan no ma*, including the *tokonoma* and *chigaidana*, carry the painting program of *Chinese Women and Children at Play*. (Fig. 2.23) The west wall has three *fusuma* panels with only *Children at Play* (唐子遊 *Karako asobi*), and the four panels on the south side continue with the theme of *Chinese Women and Children at Play*. The middle room, the *ni no ma*, has four panels on the north wall of *Chinese Women and Children at Play* and the four panels each on east, south, and west walls bear the theme of *Flowers and Birds*. The north wall of the lower room, the *san no ma*, has two panels on the westernmost side of *Chinese Children at Play* and two panels of *Flowers and Birds*. The remainder of the panels on the west and east walls show a variety of native vegetation, interspersed with birds at rest or in flight. (Fig. 2.24) Also painted on a gold background with bright colors, the birds and plants that adorn these walls are quite large compared to the small figures in the highest room. (Fig. 2.25) The disparity in subjects within individual rooms and the imbalance of scale between the upper and lower rooms suggests they were not painted as one complete program, but were taken from two different locations.²⁵⁵ To have a stepped-floor arrangement of rooms in a convent is not common,²⁵⁶ but may be explained by the fact that this particular *shoin* was originally Emperor Go-sai's rest pavilion. The bright colors and gold leaf background, unusual in *shoin* of imperial Buddhist convents at that time, reflect the high status of the original occupant and the "public" nature of the rooms.

Chino's Research on Gender, Architecture, and *Shōhekiga* in Japan

Unlike the *Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons* painting program, which was seen in temples, convents, and residences for both male and female occupants, the paintings in the *omote shoin* have an ostensibly overt "female" theme of *Chinese Women and Children at Play*. The relationship between *shōhekiga* depicting women and children in Chinese garb in rooms

²⁵⁵ Sanekata Yōko notes the practice of removing valuable *fusuma* or rearranging sliding door panels taken from other rooms to create a composite program, which seems to be the case at Reikanji. Seasonal markers of flowers and birds indicate part of a four-season theme, although a four-season theme is not clearly organized in the *omote shoin*. Sanekata, "Reikanji," 110.

²⁵⁶ Chino Kaori points out the floors of the Audience Hall were leveled when the building was reconfigured from a man's residence to a woman's. In Chino, "Tennō no haha no tame no kaiga," 94.

occupied by women has previously been addressed by Chino Kaori in, “Tennō no haha no tame kaiga” [Paintings for the emperor’s mother], the culmination of her research on gender, architecture and *shōhekiga*.²⁵⁷ Her essay centered on the wall paintings in the *ōhōjō*, the main abbot’s residential quarters, at Nanzenji, primarily focusing on the paintings in the largest room of that building. By linking shifts in the themes of the painting program to the different occupants and locations of the room over time, she argued that the gender of the occupant impacted the interior architectural space in the choice of *shōhekiga* theme used. In other words, paintings specifically designed with a female occupant in mind helped to make the space “female.”²⁵⁸

The building at Nanzenji was originally built for emperor Ogimachi 正親町天皇 (1517–1593; r. 1557–1586) as the Main Hall (*shinden* 寢殿) of his retirement palace (*ingosho* 院御所). Shortly after his death it was occupied by Katahito 良仁, the eldest son of the succeeding emperor, Go-yōzei. After Katahito entered the temple Ninnaji, Go-yōzei’s mother, Shinjōtōmon’in 新上東門院 (1553-1620), moved into the palace, and it became known as the *nyoin gosho* 女院御所. Part of her palace, the Audience Hall (対面所 *taimenjo*), was moved to Nanzenji in 1602, where it remains today, renamed as the *ōhōjō*.

The history of the *ōhōjō* can be divided into distinct phases, depending on the location and occupant of the rooms. Through examination of the *shōhekiga* of the rooms and the changes in floor level and room orientation, researchers have found that it was reformulated three times: 1) when it was originally constructed for the Ōgimachi emperor; 2) when it was refashioned as Shinjōtōmon’in’s living quarters; and 3) when it was moved to Nanzenji and became the *ōhōjō*.²⁵⁹ There was no change in the buildings when Go-yōzei’s son, Katahito, lived in them. Chino based her thesis – that rooms are gendered by the theme of *shōhekiga* – on this information. Her reasoning mainly follows the decision to repaint the main room (the so-called *Narutaki* room) when the buildings were transformed into Shinjōtōmon’in’s palace.

During the time when Ōgimachi and Katahito lived in the rooms, the most public room was decorated with paintings of male Chinese (*Kara*) exemplars.²⁶⁰ (Fig. 2.26) These paintings

²⁵⁷ Chino Kaori, “Tennō no haha no tame no kaiga,” 83-128.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 92. Chino draws her information from the architectural reconstruction research conducted earlier by Nishi Kazuo and Ozawa Asae and published in the essay, “Nanzenji Ōhōjō zenshin tatemono no fukugen kōsatsu.”

²⁶⁰ I have translated the term *Kara* 唐 as “Chinese,” but it is important to note *Kara* did not represent contemporary Chinese culture in Japan. Rather, the character [唐], which originally referred to the Tang Dynasty (with an alternate reading of *tō*), refers back to ancient classical

were moved to another room when the buildings were converted to the *ōhōjō*.²⁶¹ As the use of male Chinese rulers was a common one in public buildings for high-ranking aristocrats at this time, the appropriation of the theme in this room is not surprising. Chinese exemplars were presented as reminders of model behavior for their (male) occupants. Throughout the early modern period the rooms of people in positions of power were often painted with Chinese-based themes, such as scenes from Chinese history or narratives with ancient figures.²⁶² When Shinjōtōmon'in moved in, however, the Narutaki room was decorated with different wall paintings: these had a theme of Chinese Women and Children at Play. (Fig. 2.27) The motif of Chinese female figures was not common at this time, and the rarity of the theme forms one of the main points of Chino's argument.

Chino raised two main questions about the inclusion of Chinese women on the painting program at Shinjōtōmon'in's palace to make her point about the gendered nature of architecture: why are examples of "Chinese" women *shōhekiga* rare in Japan? And why do Chinese women appear in the most formal room of Shinjōtōmon'in's living quarters?²⁶³ To answer these questions she looked to a distinction she made in previous research between public/private-Kara/Yamato-masculine/feminine as prevailing binaries in art history.²⁶⁴

In Japan, gender binaries as cultural constructs have been seen in literature and art dating back to the Heian period (794-1185).²⁶⁵ In writing systems, a distinction was made

China idealized in Japanese culture at various points in its history as a center for scholar learning and Confucian values. This idealization of culture from the continent is illustrated in works of art by figures with ancient Chinese dress and hairstyles, legendary Chinese personages, and references to Chinese literary classics.

²⁶¹ Nishi attributes these paintings to Kano Eitoku. Nishi and Ozawa, "Nanzenji ōhōjō zenshin tatemono no fukugen kōsatsu," 206.

²⁶² Keiko Nakamachi, "The Patrons of Tawaraya Sōtatsu and Ogata Kōrin," in *Critical Perspectives on Classicism in Japanese Painting, 1600-1700*, ed. Elizabeth Lillehoj (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 91-92.

²⁶³ Chino, "Tennō no haha no tame no kaiga," 115.

²⁶⁴ See Chino Kaori, "Nihon bijutsu no jendā," 235-246. The following section explains Chino's position in this essay.

²⁶⁵ The notion of a public space as being gendered male and a private space gendered female dates back to the Classical period in European architectural history as well. Vitruvius, the first century Roman architect, noted the gender division in Greek houses:

Toward the inner side are the large rooms in which mistresses of the house sit with their wool-spinners. [...] This part of the house is termed "gynaeconitis." In connexion with

between *onna-de* (woman's hand) and *otoko-de* (man's hand). *Onna-e* (woman's pictures) and *otoko-e* (man's pictures) refer to painting styles and pictures either meant for or painted by men or women in the Heian period.²⁶⁶ Chino utilized these traditional constructs in the formation of the categories of *Kara* and *Yamato* central to her argument.²⁶⁷

Chino's basic line of reasoning for the dialectic she created between *Kara* and *Yamato* in Heian period painting was that *Kara* was always seen as the Other against the newly-identified culture of Heian Japan, illustrated in the appearance of the word *Yamato* in the Japanese language to differentiate itself against culture from the mainland. Therefore, paintings with Chinese subject matter referred not to the mainland, but were constructions of "China" within Japan, or *Yamato*. Paintings with Japanese subject matter were conversely designated by Chino as *Yamato* within *Yamato* (or Japan as seen through Japanese culture). Moreover, these perceived cultural divisions were gendered by an association with *Yamato* culture and femininity. Chino bolstered her point through examples of the Heian use of the

these there are ampler sets of apartments with more sumptuous peristyles. [...] Such apartments have fine entrance courts with imposing front doors of their own. [...] Men's dinner parties are held in these large rooms; for it was not the practice, according to Greek custom, for the mistress of the house to be present. On the contrary, such peristyles are called the men's apartments, since in them the men can stay without interruption from the women.

Vitruvius Pollio, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 220-221.

²⁶⁶ For scholarship on *onna-e* and *otoko-e*, see Shirahata Yoshi, "Onna-e kō," *Bijutsu kenkyū* 132 (1943): 201-210; and Akiyama Terukazu, *Heian jidai sezokuga no kenkyū* [Secular painting in the Heian period] (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1964). For a discussion in English, see Joshua Mostow, "Introduction," in *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field*, 3-5; and Akiyama Terukazu, "Women Painters at the Heian Court," trans. and adapted by Maribeth Graybill, in *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting*, ed. Marsha Smith Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 159-184. Chino also discusses these terms in detail in her essay, "Nihon bijutsu no jendā."

²⁶⁷ Chino explains the difference between her use of the terms "gender" and "sex." Sex is defined by the difference in male and female genitalia, while gender is a social construct that refers to mutable categories of "masculine" or "feminine." She notes the tendency to assign positive meaning to "masculine," with connotations of "strong, permanent, fierce" and negative meaning to "feminine," with connotations of "delicate, soft, modest." "Nihon bijutsu no jendā," 237-238.

terms *onna-de* (woman's hand), which was Japanese writing in a native syllabary (*kana*), and *otoko-de* (man's hand), which was writing in Chinese characters. Women were officially taught only the Japanese syllabary, while men were familiar with both writing systems. The two writing systems took on private or public characteristics as personal diaries were penned in *onna-de* while official records were written in *otoko-de*. The correlations between the writing system, Japanese and Chinese cultures, and women and men thus formed parallels of Kara=public=male and Yamato=private=female. As a point of illustration, Chino cited the case of Ki no Tsurayuki (868-945), who assumed the guise of a woman to write a private diary in *onna-de*.²⁶⁸ The association of writing his private thoughts in the native Japanese syllabary meant his personal identity had to be female as well, an idea that Chino extended to Heian culture at large. With this binary system in place, Chino was able to analyze many paintings throughout history through the filter of gender.

The painting program in the upper room of the *omote shoin* at Reikanji seems at first glance to follow Chino's Kara/Yamato/gender argument. The theme of Chinese Women and Children at Play was not seen in public spaces of temples or residences where a man was the primary occupant during the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, yet Reikanji and Daishōji have paintings with this theme, suggesting its suitability for decorating spaces occupied by women in positions of authority.²⁶⁹ As an appropriate theme in a formal, public setting, the Chinese women and children theme does mirror that of male Chinese exemplars seen in temples and aristocratic structures of the same time period.

As Chino argues for the Nanzenji *ōhōjō*, the presence of an elite female occupant may complicate a room's theme, but the Chinese women and children theme encompasses components suitable for the occupant's status and gender. In the case of Shinjōtōmon'in rooms, the theme of Chinese women lends itself easily to Chino's binary argument because it forms the main motif of the *shōheiga* in the Narutaki room. Chino asserts that the subject matter of *shōheiga* was chosen according to the use and function of a room, the gender, social position

²⁶⁸ Ki Tsurayuki (d. 945 or 946), *Tosa nikki* (Tosa Diary), quoted in Chino, "Nihon bijutsu no jendā," 241.

²⁶⁹ While other scholars have alluded to the theme at other convents, it is unknown which rooms they decorate. See Reizei, "Monzeki niin no kaiga: shōheiga o chūshin toshite," 168-176; and Barbara Ruch, "Chino Kaori's Last Contribution to the Imperial Buddhist Convent Research and Restoration Project: Miyazaki Yūzensai's *Chinese Children at Play* at Daishōji Imperial Convent," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*. Special Issue: *Japanese Art: The Scholarship and Legacy of Chino Kaori*, ed. Melissa McCormick 15 (December 2003):108-109.

and status of its occupant. Furthermore, the subject of a painting program was based on precedents, either recent or the revival of an ancient theme, which limited the possible choices.²⁷⁰ The subject matter of women and children that adorns the walls in the Narutaki room — the most public room of the palace — was decided when the palace became Shinjōtōmon'in's Audience Hall. Her status as the emperor's mother and a powerful figure recognized by shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu as a political ally necessitated a public theme like Chinese figures.²⁷¹ Because she was a woman, however, it was more appropriate to have female figures and children, rather than male Chinese exemplars on the *shōhekiga*. The use of Chinese figures is thus seen as following the binary argument of Kara-public/Yamato-private, while the inclusion of women and children speaks to the gender of the occupant.

While Chino's line of reasoning worked well in the example of the Nanzenji *ōhōjō*, not all *shōhekiga* in all main rooms occupied by women fit so neatly into her binary structures. The wide variety of subject matter is one of the major problems with trying to relate gender to interior architectural space. Her Kara-Yamato/public-private/male-female argument is compelling and has some merit when speaking of premodern Japanese art history in general, but starts to break down even in the Narutaki room as the use of a Kara theme as a public-private/male-female dialectic is called into question.

After making an argument that the female figures were appropriate for the space because the occupant was female, Chino revealed that there are two *male* figures in the *tokonoma*, flanking the waterfall scene. (Fig. 2.28) The two male figures, holdovers from the previous painting program, raise questions about women and children being more appropriate as room decoration for a female occupant. The presence of male figures is explained by Chino as indicating the building still belonged to the emperor as his mother drew her power from association with him.²⁷² This confusing point contradicts her previous assertion that the rooms were remade for the emperor's mother. The essay until this point validated the female occupant, Shinjōtōmon'in, but the presence of male figures illustrates the difficulty in making clear gender assignments to architectural spaces based on painting programs. Chino's explanation also raises the question of to whom the palace belongs. With shifting functions and changes of location common in Edo period buildings, to what degree does the occupant, or the patron who supports that occupant, possess the space?

That question is important because it brings to light the need to focus on the context of the built environment when discussing the significance of wall paintings. While the origin of a

²⁷⁰ Chino, "Tennō no haha no tame no kaiga," 117.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 118-120.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 121-122.

building that houses an elite woman impacts the understanding of its decoration, the effect of the painting program, along with the significance of the theme, changes in its current setting of a convent. Earlier associations of women and children with fecundity, harmonious families, and the perpetuation of bloodlines in rooms for female occupants in an imperial palace setting may give way to associations of power and prestige, authority, and a general moral system in the convent setting. As Chino and other scholars have noted, *Kara* figures on the walls reflected the high social and political status of the occupant and followed a tradition of (literally) placing the occupant in the same company as the painted Chinese exemplars.²⁷³

Perhaps the Chinese women on the walls of Reikanji's *shoin* were meant to elicit similar responses of upstanding moral behavior and authority in its viewers. In this scenario, the paintings become, like the *shiki kōsaku* paintings, a *kankai zu*. Given the *Kara* theme on the walls with a feminine twist, the subject matter seemingly lends itself neatly to Chino's argument of a *Kara* theme in a public space for a highly-placed woman (in this case the daughter of an emperor). As a "gendered" theme, the mothers and children scenes in Reikanji's *shoin* are obvious; groups of women stand watching and entertaining themselves among clusters of frolicking children. At the same time, this program fuels the imagination with worlds unlike the reality of the nuns' existence, thus suggesting a different reading. The Chinese women and children, painted in bright colors on gold leaf, may be an imagination of an unreal world – that of the far off country, and a literary one at that, with characters dressed in classical style. Not only does it represent the fantasy of the imaginary place of *Kara*, it could depict a lifestyle – of motherhood – that the nuns at Reikanji would not likely experience. If *Kara* represented an "other" in late medieval Japan, an amorphous power beyond the borders of Japan's archipelago that harkened back to an ancient place of authority to which to aspire, the *Kara* in eighteenth-century Japan could be representative of assimilated paragons of virtue that represented an otherworldly ideal. We can think of the significance of *Chinese Women and Children at Play* in the *omote shoin* at Reikanji, then, in multiple ways: it might represent the ideal role for women – that of motherhood – yet shows it in a non-threatening, unrealistic

²⁷³ Karen Gerhart takes a didactic reading of Chinese themes on the *fusuma-e* of the Visitation Palace (上洛殿 *jōrakuden*) at Nagoya Castle, built for the third shogun's visit in 1634. She asserts that the Upper Chamber (上段の間 *jōdan no ma*) and the First Chamber (一の間 *ichi no ma*), used for formal audiences, were decorated with paintings based on a sixteenth-century Chinese didactic text, *Dijian tushuo* (Jp. *Teikan zusetsu* 諦観図説; Illustrated Mirror of Emperors). Such placement of Chinese exemplars in the formal meeting rooms of the shogun raised his image to that of the virtuous Chinese rulers on the walls. Karen Gerhart, *The Eyes of Power: Art and Early Tokugawa Authority* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 35.

way, not as a directive or goal for these particular women, by removing it to the far off land represented by *Kara*. It might suggest exemplary behavior for a high-ranking woman. Moreover, it suggests that the *omote shoin* is a “woman’s space” as well as a “public space.”

Chino’s engagement with gender issues in the Nanzenji *ōhōjō* example illustrates the complexities of quantifying/qualifying gender significance to *shōhekiga* subjects. A more nuanced stance must be taken because the variation in subject matter for wall paintings is too great to generalize. What Chino effectively illustrated, however, was that gender is a methodological approach that can be used to clarify/argue the function(s) of *shōhekiga* in architectural space. Chino’s willingness to address the issue of gender and architecture through *shōhekiga* is an important feature of her essay. Tracing the shifts in architectural space (the lowering of the floors, the reconfiguring of the rooms) depending on the occupant and the replacement of the wall paintings to suit the female occupant demonstrates in no uncertain terms that gender does impact the architectural space and that *shōhekiga* themes are, at least sometimes, decided with the gender of an occupant in mind.

I expand Chino’s argument by reiterating that gender, while certainly a factor in painting programs, was not the overriding factor in choosing a program’s subject. As the occupants could not be defined by one characteristic, “female-ness,” neither could their surroundings be reduced to one singular reading. Chino’s assertion of division of space and the gendering of cultures is thought-provoking and a necessary component of discussions of gendered space. Other aspects that inform the location and choice of *shōhekiga* themes include representation of cultural identity, didacticism, images of authority, and family and political association through painting subjects. The presence of *Chinese Women and Children at Play* in the public domain of the *omote shoin* at Reikanji speaks to general points of cultural identity and gender, but importantly, it is complemented by the program of *shiki kōsaku* in the *oku shoin*. As explored above, the Rice Cultivation in Four Season theme could be equally suitable for women in positions of authority.

Conclusion: Gender and Hōkyōji

Like the Audience Hall for Shinjōtōmon’in, the *shoin* at Hōkyōji was occupied by women, and the space reflects the public and the private, the domestic and the communal functions necessitated by the nuns. Their high religious standing and elite social status must be acknowledged when examining their built environment. Gender can be seen to play a role in the decoration of the convent space through the choice of appropriate themes, but factors of class, religious stature, and precedence must also be included in discussion of architectural painting.

The issue of gender in the painting program of the *shoin* has larger implications for the material and visual culture at the convent. If the *shōhekiga* have gender significance, it stands to reason that other objects connected to the convent's female occupants would similarly be engendered. Each room has a function or functions, whether or not the occupant acts upon that purpose while in the room. The two largest rooms of the *shoin* were public spaces in which guests were received. Buddhist rituals were performed in the front central room of the *hondō* (which opens onto the altar room). Accordingly we can assume that the decoration in the room – *shōhekiga*, ritual objects, objects placed in the *tokonoma* – are placed with that room's (at least nominal) function in mind. The function of a room or its decoration was not static, however; the spaces may have been used for other purposes.²⁷⁴ But the significance of gender in analyzing *shōhekiga* extends to other forms of decoration in these spaces.

As seen in the examples at Hōkyōji and Reikanji, the *shōhekiga* decorating the walls of rooms do not overtly reflect the gender of the occupant of the room. Farming themes are common on temple walls and residences.²⁷⁵ Chinese themes were also popular during the Edo period in both male and female-occupied spaces, although the placement of the Chinese women and children in the most important room (the upper room, the highest, and, therefore, most difficult to access) can arguably be said to be meant for the eyes of the most high-status occupant (i.e., abbess) and high-ranking guests.

The painting programs in the two most public rooms at Hōkyōji were likely chosen not only because the occupant was female, but because they were appropriate as decoration for rooms used by elite women. As a *kankai zu*, the Rice Cultivation in Four Seasons theme

²⁷⁴ It is important to acknowledge the shifting significance of objects according to location and time. Two recent detailed studies by art historians address the multivalent meanings of decoration in religious spaces. See Andrew Watsky, *Chikubushima*, in which he meticulously examines the floral motifs and materials in the *moya* (central core) of Tsukubusuma Shrine and argues for the political, religious, and historical motives for the Toyotomi patronage of temple building in Momoyama Japan. Watsky, *Chikubushima*, 2004. Also, see Gregory Levine's dissertation on the multiple readings of the painting program by Kano Eitoku, *Landscape with Birds and Flowers*, in the Daitokuji subtemple, Jukōin. Focusing on one of the most well-known examples of Momoyama painting, Levine looked beyond the formal qualities of the paintings to examine the historical, architectural, and ritual meaning embedded in the paintings. Gregory Levine, "Jukōin: Art, Architecture, and Mortuary Culture at a Japanese Zen Buddhist Temple" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1997).

²⁷⁵ Other motifs that appear on convent walls – cranes, monkeys, seasonal flowers – are also common on temples and residences as well.

originally set a moral paragon for male behavior. The inclusion of women in the scenes at Hōkyōji acknowledges the role of women's virtuous behavior as well and, perhaps, highlights the occupant of the *shoin*. Although only two examples of *shoin* decoration were discussed here, the *shōhekiga* themes illustrate how intricately discussion of gender is tied with class, social and religious status. The wide difference of themes in public spaces, and the variety of themes in public and private room decoration, points to the complexity of meaning as it also highlights the necessity of new readings for common painting themes within individual sites. The decorations on the walls may have been chosen because they were appropriate for both elite men and women and may have been altered to recognize the presence of women in positions of authority.

This study turns now to take a closer look at one woman in such a position of authority at Hōkyōji. The twenty-second abbess of the convent, Hongakuin no miya, is the subject of the next chapter, and her biography as a nun and contributor to culture is examined through her works of art. Focusing on a specific person highlights not only the individual contributions she made but also the community in which she lived and worked and the sources of inspiration that guided her creativity.

Chapter Three

The Individual: the Artist, the Abbess

In addition to the institutional and contextual aspects of art production, an important component of Hōkyōji's visual culture comes from the individuals who make up the convent community. Certain nuns at imperial Buddhist convents have received particular attention for their artistic talent both within their lifetimes and in modern art historical discourse. At Hōkyōji, the nun whose artistic achievements are best recorded and preserved today is Tokugon Rihō 徳巖理豊 (1672-1745), who was the twenty-second abbess of Hōkyōji from 1689 to 1731, and is also known today by the name she took upon her retirement from the abbacy, Hongakuin no miya 本覚院宮.²⁷⁶ Many objects attributed to her remain at the convent and are regularly displayed at public functions or exhibitions.²⁷⁷

A prolific painter and calligrapher, Hongakuin no miya was an abbess who chose to express her religious devotion, elite education, and creative talents in part through visual culture. She was certainly not the only nun who created art at Hōkyōji – as part of their upbringing nuns regularly learned how to use a brush for painting and calligraphy, as will be discussed in greater detail below – but she is the nun who is best represented in extant objects at the convent. The reverence shown for her creative output is seen in the careful preservation of the objects made by her and reflects the high regard held at the convent for her religious

²⁷⁶ Although Rihō did not take the name Hongakuin no miya until late in her life, I will refer to her as Hongakuin no miya throughout this chapter, even when referring to her early life, to avoid confusion.

²⁷⁷ Works of art by Hongakuin no miya appear, for example, in the following exhibition catalogs: Mitsukoshi, ed. *Kyō no miyabi, Kyū goshō ten: Mikokai no amamonzeki no meihō o ichidō ni* [The elegance of Kyoto, an exhibition of former palaces: famous treasures of private imperial Buddhist convents] (Nagoya: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1986); Kasumi Kaikan Shiryōten Iinkai, ed., *Monzeki amadera no meihō*; Maribeth Graybill, *Days of Discipline and Grace: Treasures from the Imperial Buddhist Convents of Kyoto* (New York: Institute of Medieval Japanese Studies, 1998); Fister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns*; and Chūsei Nihon Kenkyūjo, ed. *Amamonzeki jūin no sekai*.

achievements and her artistic talent. While I do not mean to imply Hongakuin no miya's experience mirrors that of all nuns in imperial Buddhist convents, studying her role as a producer of visual culture can help shed light on the artistic relationships nuns had with professional painters and the greater religious community. Her works of art manifest the high level of education and social circles that Hongakuin no miya negotiated as princess and abbess.

Hongakuin no miya was the eleventh daughter of Emperor Go-sai. Her mother was Shin dainagon no tsubone 新大納言局 (d. 1695), the daughter of Provisional Major Councillor (*Ken dainagon* 権大納言) Seikanji Tomotsuna 清閑寺共綱 (1612-1675).²⁷⁸ In childhood, Hongakuin no miya was known as Kashi no miya 檣宮. She moved to Hōkyōji on the twenty-first day of the fourth month of Tenna 2 (1682) and began religious training with the twenty-first abbess, Richū 里忠 (1641-1689), on the same day. Seven months later, on the fourteenth day of the eleventh month of 1682, she became ordained and entered monastic life. When Richū died in 1689, Kashi no miya took the name Tokugon Rihō and became head of the convent. In 1707, she was jointly appointed abbess of Keiaiji, which had burned down in the fifteenth century and was not rebuilt.²⁷⁹ The same year she was given the right to wear a purple robe, a symbol of her attainment of the highest rank among nuns. The right to wear a purple robe was usually reserved for the abbess of Keiaiji, which indicated the high status given to it as the top-ranked convent in the *ama gozan* system.²⁸⁰ In 1733 she retired from the abbacy and took the name Hongakuin no miya. She continued to live in a small hermitage on the grounds of Daijiin until her death in 1745.

In addition to Hongakuin no miya's religious achievements, much of her legacy at Hōkyōji comes from the art objects she created and from her work to restore the convent and organize its archives. Hongakuin no miya compiled a vast array of original documents from the Muromachi period and delineated the history of the convent and Keiaiji in her own writing, making it easy, as the current abbess has stated, for successors to understand and access.²⁸¹ She also gathered information and documents on Mugai Nyodai, the founder of Keiaiji, and

²⁷⁸ Shin dainagon no tsubone's birth name was Tomoko 共子, and she was also known as Higashi Sanjō no tsubone 東三条局.

²⁷⁹ The abbesses of Daishōji and Hōkyōji alternated abbacy of this honorary position.

²⁸⁰ See Chapter One for more information about the *ama gozan* system and the 1707 granting of purple robes to three convent abbesses. The ranking of Kyoto *ama gozan* convents from highest to lowest was: Keiaiji, Gonenji 護念寺, Danrinji 壇林寺, Erinji 恵林寺, and Tsūgenji 通玄寺, according to Eishū, abbess of Daishōji, in a document sent to the imperial palace in Kyoto in 1707. Oka, "Kinsei no bikuni gosho (ge)," 27.

²⁸¹ Private conversation with Hōkyōji Abbess Tanaka Eiko, September 24, 2004.

wrote a biography of the Zen abbess.²⁸² The work that she undertook has helped to shape the identity of the convent today,²⁸³ and it is not surprising that the convent places so much value on her artistic, religious, and cultural endeavors.

From an art historical standpoint, the numerous extant objects created by her in the Hōkyōji collection make them prime subjects of study. That she was well regarded as an artist within her lifetime is indicated by many requests for her paintings and calligraphy by individuals and temples around the country, which will be discussed below. Her reputation as an artist continued after her death, as demonstrated by her inclusion in the *Koga bikō* 古画備考, an artist dictionary first compiled by Asaoka Okisada 長岡興禎 in 1850.²⁸⁴ Three examples of Hongakuin no miya's work — a self-portrait, a hanging scroll in the Bird and Flower painting (*kachōga* 花鳥画) tradition, and a long hanging scroll of calligraphy — are the objects of study in this chapter. Examination of them will help illuminate her biography and highlight the broad reach of her artistic talents.

The Religious Training of Hongakuin no miya

Although many details of her day-to-day devotional activities are unknown, recent research has given outline to Hongakuin no miya's religious training and devotional life.²⁸⁵ After ascending to the abbacy in 1689, Hongakuin no miya did much to restore the Hōkyōji complex. In 1722 she built a hall at Daijiin; in 1723 she built a hermitage for her retirement on the same grounds.²⁸⁶ During 1725 and 1726, she renovated the guest hall and the outer wall, and built the *uchigenkan* (内玄関 secondary entrance) at Hōkyōji. When Hongakuin no miya's successor, Richō, was scheduled to enter the convent in 1731, the abbess carried out large-scale reconstruction on the buildings and roof of Hōkyōji. Along with renovating her convent, she built a sutra pagoda at Shinnyōji 真如寺, a temple founded by Mugai Nyodai which served as

²⁸² Fister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns*, 30.

²⁸³ On the editing of Hōkyōji lineages, see Oka, “Kinsei no bikuni gosho (jō),” especially pages 48-53.

²⁸⁴ The *Koga bikō* was later updated in 1905 by Ōta Kin 大田謹. Asaoka Okisada and Ōta Kin, *Koga bikō*, 2nd ed. (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1912), 31-32.

²⁸⁵ See, for example, Fister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns*, 30; idem, “Hōkyōji Imperial Convent,” 74-75, and “Daughters of the Dharma: The Religious and Cultural Pursuits of Four Imperial Nuns,” in *Amamonzeki jūin no sekai*, 291-294; Oka, “Kinsei no bikuni gosho (jō);” idem, “Kinsei no bikuni gosho (ge);” and idem, “Nōsho.”

²⁸⁶ The following list of renovations draws from Oka, “Nōsho,” 56. See also Fister, “Hōkyōji Imperial Convent,” 74.

the mausoleum for Hōkyōji abbesses, in 1724. At Shinnyōji, she also restored the Dharma Hall (*Hattō* 法堂) and constructed a mortuary hall (known as the *Nyodaidō* 如大堂) in Nyodai's memory.

In addition to the restorative work Hongakuin no miya undertook, some information is also known about her spiritual education. After beginning her religious training with Richū, she continued her studies with Ōbaku Zen priests Daizui Dōki 大随道機 (1652-1717) and his student, Hyakusetsu Gen'yō 百拙元養 (1668-1749) starting in 1709.²⁸⁷ In 1711, Daizui wrote a certificate of Hongakuin no miya's spiritual awakening (*inkajō* 印可状). He later presented her with a surplice (*kesa* 袈裟) and a written lineage of Rinzai Zen masters. The three gifts confirmed the transmission of Dharma from Daizui to Hongakuin no miya.²⁸⁸

In choosing spiritual leaders affiliated with Ōbaku Zen, Hongakuin no miya joined a group of devoted aristocrats, including Emperor Go-mizunoo, who turned to the school for Buddhist training in the early Edo period.²⁸⁹ The emperor's involvement with Ōbaku is well-documented, and he is listed on Ōbaku genealogical charts as a full master.²⁹⁰ Among imperial Buddhist abbesses, Shōzan Gen'yō, the founding abbess of Rinjyūji, was also a devout student of Ōbaku Zen. In 1665 Gen'yō took precepts from Ryōkei and continued practicing Ōbaku Zen after establishing her convent in 1682.²⁹¹

Daizui's acknowledgment of Hongakuin no miya's spiritual awakening attests to her devotion to the practice of Zen Buddhism. On that occasion, Hyakusetsu wrote a dedicatory poem to the abbess:

How unusual, a lady of noble birth undertaking the practice of Zen,
Manifesting vital Zen activity rivaling that of former Abbess Mugai;
Suddenly, the nose she got from her mother was firmly in her grasp,

²⁸⁷ Oka, "Kinsei no bikuni gosho (jō)," 54-55. For a summary of Hongakuin no miya's religious training in English, see Patricia Fister, "Daughters of the Dharma," 291-292; and idem, "Hōkyōji Imperial Convent," 74-75.

²⁸⁸ Fister, "Hōkyōji Imperial Convent," 74.

²⁸⁹ Go-mizunoo also studied with masters of other Buddhist sects, including Shingon, Tendai, Rinzai Zen, and Jōdō.

²⁹⁰ Indeed, he was the sole Dharma recipient of Ryōkei 龍溪 (1602-1670) after the Ōbaku priest's untimely death. On Go-mizunoo's relationship with Ryōkei and the succession of his Dharma line, see Helen Baroni, *Obaku Zen: The Emergence of the Third Sect of Zen in Tokugawa, Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 171-180.

²⁹¹ Fister, "Rinkyūji Imperial Convent," 108.

A flower opened, dissolving the troubled waves of endless ages past.²⁹²

Even with the exalted language expected on such a celebratory occasion, the poem highlights Hongakuin no miya's religious devotion by comparing her behavior to that of Mugai Nyodai, as well as the "uniqueness" of the acknowledgment of her enlightenment, even as an imperial Buddhist abbess. Although the details of her daily religious practice are not elucidated in written records, her devotion is nonetheless manifested in her actions – studying with Daizui and Hyakusetsu, rebuilding Hōkyōji, Daijūin, and convents related to Mugai Nyodai, and creating many works of devotional painting and calligraphy during her adult life.

Hongakuin no miya's Self-Portrait

A visual "document" that helps shed light on Hongakuin no miya's religious identity is a self-portrait painted and inscribed by the abbess in 1713, two years after she received the certificate of transmission from Daizui. (Fig. 3.1) The portrait depicts her in robes befitting an abbess, seated in a high-backed chair, facing slightly right with a staff (*shujō* 拄杖), at her side.²⁹³ She holds a whisk (*hossu* 拂子) and wears the purple robe with chrysanthemum design granted her in 1707. The staff, whisk, and robes are symbols of her status as an abbess.²⁹⁴ An elaborately decorated surplice is draped over her left shoulder, held in place with a large ring, and her gaze is piercing and serious.²⁹⁵ The position, posture, and costume of Hongakuin no

²⁹² Translated by Patricia Fister in "Daughters of the Dharma," 291.

²⁹³ In her inscription, she notes the staff is made of wisteria (*utō* 烏藤). Fister, "Hōkyōji Imperial Convent," 74.

²⁹⁴ Griffith Foulk and Robert Sharf, "On the Ritual Use of Ch'an Portraiture," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 7 (1993/1994): 158.

²⁹⁵ Griffith Foulk and Robert Sharf give a succinct description of the compositional formula for such paintings:

Monks seated cross-legged on a chair with shoes placed in front on a footstool (*tōjō* 踏床). Dressed in full ceremonial costume, with inner and outer robe (*hōe* 法衣) and a kasaya (surplice) (*kesa* 袈裟) draped over the left shoulder. The surplice of Zen lineage abbots is held together with a large ornamental ring (*hekikan* 璧環) that rests over the area of the heart. The priest is presented holding an implement in his right hand, typically a whisk (*hossu* 拂子), scepter (*nyoi* 如意), staff (*shujō* 拄杖), or bamboo staff (*shippei* 竹篋), all of which are proper regalia to the office of the abbot. The staff is often propped up against the chair. The chair itself may be high or low-backed, straight or with curvilinear arms, and is sometimes draped with an elaborately figured textile.

miya is typical of *chinsō* (or *chinzō*), formal portraits of Zen Buddhist clergy used in mortuary and memorial rituals.²⁹⁶

While Hongakuin no miya's portrait may have followed a standard composition, its value as *chinsō* goes beyond artistic style to the role it plays in honoring the sitter and delineating her Zen genealogy.²⁹⁷ As objects of devotion with specific ritual purposes imbued with the power of the individual, *chinsō* belonged to a group of sacred objects that perpetuated Zen lineages and established relationships between Zen masters and their followers.²⁹⁸ The

Usually the sitter is in three-quarter view, although other positions are also possible. Finally, portraits are usually inscribed with a eulogy or "appreciation" (*san 讚*) in free verse, followed by a dedication recounting the circumstances of the production of the portrait and eulogy. *Ibid.*, 157.

²⁹⁶ In their study of *chinsō*, Foulk and Sharf convincingly argue that *chinsō* were not limited to painted portraits but included a range of portrait objects, such as sculpture, mummies, and inscribed paintings which were used in memorial rituals. *Ibid.*, 158.

²⁹⁷ Yuko Lippit, "Awakenings: The Development of the Zen Figural Pantheon," in *Awakenings: Zen Figure Painting in Medieval Japan* (New York: Japan Society, 2007), 36. See also Yukio Lippit and Gregory Levine, "Patriarchs Heading West: An Introduction" in *Awakenings*, 19; and Foulk and Sharf, "On the Ritual Use of Ch'an Portraiture," 158.

²⁹⁸ On the ritual use of Zen portraits, see Levine, "The Contested Corpus of Chan/Zen Portraiture," in *Daitokuji*, 4-30, especially pages 23-30. See also Lippit, "Awakenings," 35-51. The exact nature of the use of *chinsō* as proof of dharma transmission from Zen master to disciple has been the subject of recent debate among Buddhist scholars and art historians. In their study of *chinsō* terminology and use in text and image, Griffith Foulk, Robert Sharf, and Elizabeth Horton Sharf found there was no evidence that *chinsō* were used as certificates of enlightenment or proof of dharma inheritance. Foulk and Sharf, "On the Ritual Use of Ch'an Portraiture," 158. Levine also argues for an examination of *chinsō* that includes both ritual and visual experience. *Daitokuji*, 23-25. Lippit acknowledges the importance of *chinsō* as visual documents in memorial rituals and Zen teaching, while allowing that they exemplified the "ideology of special transmission" characteristic of Zen. "Awakenings," 36. Bernard Faure sees the function of *chinsō* as belonging to a group of documents that served as certificates of transmission. In his words, "It was the device [...] that allowed the ritual transmission of the master's charisma to take place and that provided access to it, thereby linking magically the possessor of the *chinsō* to the mainstream of the tradition perpetuated by his master." *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: a Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 174-175. And Helmut Brinker argues that the *chinsō* portrait was

power of a portrait came from its role as a “substitute body.” The portrait was not a mere representation of a figure but rather a stand-in for the figure, animated through its function in memorial rituals, its likeness to an individual, and through “eye-opening” ceremonies (*kaigen kuyō* 開眼供養) which awakened Buddhist icons.²⁹⁹ *Chinsō* were important documents that marked one’s place in the lineage/genealogy of a Zen priest. The fact that they were visual objects were crucial to their devotional power. As Levine and Lippit remark, “the pictorial figure, regardless of its origins, served to embody the special nature of the Chan/Zen dharma genealogy, to visualize and arouse understanding of the acts and behaviors expected of an awakened Chan/Zen patriarch, and to mediate the relationships between charismatic masters and their constituencies.”³⁰⁰

That portraits are a crucial link among lineage, memorial ritual, and individual is seen in the fact that all imperial convents have paintings of their abbesses which are venerated on special occasions.³⁰¹ Portraits for the most part were painted by professional artists, relatives, attendants, later abbesses, or, in the case of a couple of abbesses, by themselves. They are usually displayed only during memorial rituals and remain in convents connected with the individual. Most portraits were painted shortly after their deaths or on the occasion of a special year anniversary, but some portraits of abbesses were painted many years after their deaths to replace damaged or lost images.³⁰² The late “reissue” of portraits centuries after the deaths of the abbesses they portray attest to their importance in memorial rituals, which necessitated the presence of the person in image.

Identifying Hongakuin no miya

Hongakuin no miya’s portrait at Hōkyōji also serves as the abbess during memorial rituals. Unlike most other abbess portraits in other imperial Buddhist convents, however, it was painted during her lifetime and is therefore more correctly known as a “longevity” portrait (*juzō* 寿像), a figural painting executed before the sitter’s death. Also, the painting is a self-

proof of transmission as “tangible evidence for the authentic succession of the doctrine.”

Helmut Brinker and Hiroshi Kanazawa, *Zen Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings* (Zürich: Artibus Asiae Publishers, Supplementum 40, 1996), 117.

²⁹⁹ For a description of “eye-opening” ceremonies, see Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy*, 170-173. See also Levine, *Daitokuji*, 24.

³⁰⁰ Levine and Lippit, “Patriarchs Heading West,” 19.

³⁰¹ Patricia Fister, “Honoring the Convent Founders and Restorers: Portraits and Treasured Possessions,” in *Amamonzeki jiin no sekai*, 39.

³⁰² Fister, “Honoring the Convent Founders and Restorers,” in *Amamonzeki jiin no sekai*, 39.

portrait, and bears an inscription by the abbess.³⁰³ While other examples of self-portraits by an abbess exists, such as those by Rinkyūji abbess Gen'yō's which will be discussed below, it was not common for clergy to paint themselves. *Chinsō* painted during a Zen master's lifetime were often painted upon the request of a follower and inscribed by the sitter. The act of painting and receiving provided a "form of communication" between monks and the recipients of their *chinsō* that strengthened the Zen lineage.³⁰⁴ Hongakuin no miya's portrait may have been painted after a request or, as is more likely for reasons discussed below, upon her own initiative. The self-portrait may have been executed to serve as a memorial portrait or hung and venerated during her lifetime.³⁰⁵ As a self-portrait, it offers a subjective vision of Hongakuin no miya that marks who she had become through her awakening and projected herself as she should be remembered.

How, then, is an identity of Hongakuin no miya constructed in her self-portrait? Although the painting is of an individual, categories of type play a large part in "identifying" her. The painting composition – Hongakuin no miya seated in a high-backed chair with feet tucked under her robe, shoes before her on a low stool, holding a whisk with a staff by her side – points to her religious stature. By painting her portrait as a *chinsō*, she aligned herself with other abbesses of her lineage and the greater pantheon of awakened Buddhist prelates. The painting is given a distinct ritual purpose and place within the convent.

The captured physical likeness of the abbess can also be seen as a device used to identify the seated figure. Hongakuin no miya painted her appearance to be satisfactory to her and presumably recognizable to others who knew her. This is not to say the portrait of Hongakuin no miya captured her true looks. The visual gap between the painting and her actual appearance are an inevitable fact of portraiture, given that it is impossible to truly achieve exactness in representation. As art historian Richard Brilliant notes, "Even the notion of *likeness* itself presupposes some degree of difference between the things compared,

³⁰³ Helmut Brinker acknowledges that longevity portraits were not as common as posthumous *chinsō*, but in the case that they were painted, they were usually inscribed by the sitter. *Zen Masters of Meditation*, 161.

³⁰⁴ Lippit, "Awakenings," 36.

³⁰⁵ Ceremonies known as *gyaku-shu* 逆修 (reverse rites) were performed in front of a portrait of a living abbot to ensure salvation after death. See Fister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns*, 19. See also Quitman Phillips, *The Practices of Painting in Japan, 1475-1500* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 150-151.

otherwise they would be identical and no question of likeness would arise.³⁰⁶ While viewers today may not recognize the sitter without other identifying texts, we may note that the figure in Hongakuin no miya's portrait does not look like any of the other abbesses in their portraits. In other words, portraits of abbesses and abbots were carefully painted to show individual characteristics, such as wrinkles on elderly abbesses, plump cheeks, or rounded noses. Verisimilitude to individual appearance, however, has limited benefit, since viewers who did not know the abbess when she lived would not be able to recognize her through visual means alone.

As some historians have ascertained, there are cases in which the sitter may not be the figure being honored.³⁰⁷ A portrait in Chūgūji which is honored as the abbess Shinnyo 信如 (1211-?) may be that of Ragora 羅睺羅 (skt. Rāhula), son and disciple of Sakyamuni, as it is compositionally similar to a portrait of the Buddhist deity at nearby Tōdaiji 東大寺 monastery.³⁰⁸ (Fig. 3.2) The painting depicts a figure in three-quarter view, facing right. The figure sits in a high-backed chair with feet tucked up under simple black robes. An attendant puts incense into an incense burner in the foreground, while another attendant dozes next to the chair. The elongated earlobes and the neck folds – both characteristics of an enlightened Buddha – on the figure suggest the painting may have originally been intended to be that of Ragora for use in rituals devoted to him. At the very least, it would most likely represent an idealized version of Shinnyo rather than her actual appearance. Regardless, it has come to be known as Shinnyo herself at the convent, where it is today considered a portrait of her.³⁰⁹

While a detailed examination of the role of verism in sitter physiognomy is beyond the scope of this discussion of memorial portraits at convents, it is important to note that while physical resemblance does play an important part in identifying/associating with a portrait, it is not the only way in which a sitter is identified. The portrait of Ragora at Chūgūji may have

³⁰⁶ Richard Brilliant, "Portraits: The Limitations of Likeness," *Art Journal* 46, no. 3 (Autumn, 1987): 171.

³⁰⁷ On the re-identification of a figure portrait and the implications of the act vis à vis *chinsō* and memorial ritual, see Gregory Levine, "Switching Sites and Identities: The Founder's Statue at the Buddhist Temple Kōrin'in." *Art Bulletin* 83, no. 1 (March 2001): 72-104 and "The Founder's Statue at Kōrin'in," in *Daitokuji*, 31-62. For further discussion about the reidentification of figural portraits and the loci of identity in portraiture, see also Levine, "The Frailty of Likeness," in *Daitokuji*, 63-82. On the reidentification of Buddhist sculptural icons in a ritual setting, see Fowler, *Murōji*, 175-204.

³⁰⁸ Lori Meeks, "Chūgūji," in *Amamonzeki jūin no sekai*, 48.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

been reidentified as Shinnyo, but that does not diminish its value as a portrait.³¹⁰ Indeed, the layered identities of Zen patriarch and imperial Buddhist abbess add to the hagiography of Shinnyo, elevating her status to that of Zen historical figure.

Another key element in establishing Hongakuin no miya's identity is her clothing.³¹¹ The brightly colored purple robe, evidence of her high status within the abbess community, is decorated with an embroidered chrysanthemum design and was given to her by the emperor, which she states in her inscription (*san* 讚). The chrysanthemums – crest of the imperial family – clearly connects her with nobility. Her purple robe, thus, symbolizes both her religious status and her imperial connections; it is very similar to that worn by Abbess Tengan Eikō 天巖永皎 (1732-1808) of Daishōji in her portrait. (Fig. 3.3) Eikō, the daughter of Emperor Nakamikado 中御門天皇, (1702-1737; r. 1709-1735) and Kuze Natsuko 久世夏子 (d. 1734), entered Daishōji in 1740 and became abbess in 1746. She was posthumously awarded the court rank of *jusango* 准三后, a rank just below Empress Dowager and Empress, the highest court rank ever conferred upon an imperial Buddhist abbess.³¹² She, like Hongakuin no miya, had the religious and social status worthy of the purple robe she wears.

Hongakuin no miya painted herself wearing a luxurious, elaborately detailed surplice with an intricate flower design tied with a large, decorative ring. The juxtaposition of the purple robe and flowery surplice present an image of an abbess who enjoyed the power and prestige that came from her imperial background and religious achievements. A comparison with the memorial portrait of Abbess Daitō Bunchi (1619-1697) at Enshōji emphasizes the projection of self achieved through costume in Hongakuin no miya's painting. (Fig. 3.4) The portrait of Bunchi, daughter of Go-mizunoo, was painted and inscribed in 1698 by Shinkei Hōshinnō 真敬法親王 (1649-1706), her half-brother and the abbot of Ichijōin 一乗院. The portrait bears compositional similarity to Hongakuin no miya's with Bunchi seated in a low-backed chair, hunched forward as an old woman. Her appearance is austere, with little attempt to idealize the figure. She is dressed in a simple black robe and surplice that may still exist at the convent.³¹³ The projection of Bunchi's identity aligns with her reputation as a devout

³¹⁰ For further discussion on the “site of identity” in Buddhist portraiture, see Levine, “Frailty of Likeness,” 78-81.

³¹¹ Levine, “Switching Sites,” 92.

³¹² Her portrait was inscribed by abbot Tenshin Shūyō 天真集膺 of Shōkokuji, a temple with which she had close connections, shortly after her death in 1808. See Fister, “Daishōji Imperial Convent,” in *Amamonzeki jūin no sekai*, 65-66.

³¹³ Fister, “Enshōji Imperial Convent,” in *Amamonzeki jūin no sekai*, 100.

follower of Buddhism who eschewed the trappings of court culture to further her Buddhist studies. As Shinkei wrote in her inscription:

She left the palace at an early age, donned a nun's robe, shaved her head.
She saw the truth that willows are green and grasped that flowers are red,
She trampled the great earth to dust, smashed the great void to oblivion.
She kept Reigen's pulse strong and vital, installed the traditions of Daibai,
Cleared away thorns and briars by hand establishing a great Zen monastery.³¹⁴

The first daughter of Go-mizunoo, Bunchi was married at age thirteen but returned home after three years and devoted the rest of her life to religious studies. She founded her convent, Enshōji, first on the grounds of what would become the Shūgakuin Detached Imperial Palace in northern Kyoto, but later requested and received a tract of land in Nara, where she established her convent far from the distraction of the capital.³¹⁵ Compared with the image of Hongakuin no miya, Bunchi appears austere and single-minded in her Buddhist practice. “Likeness,” in this way, is achieved not only through the verism of appearance, but also through a process that identifies the figure through ritual, textual, devotional, and hagiographic means.

Hongakuin no miya's identity in her portrait is made more definite through the inscription that is written above the image. Part biography, part Zen rhetoric, the inscription enhances the image to project her thoughts on her awakening and commitment to her Buddhist studies:

Torpidity is overly apparent in the form depicted here,
However, she would be every bit as leaden in a formless state,
No matter whether the shape is formless or possessed of form,
There's no need for you to fall back three thousand leagues,
It's staring you in the face right now, has never once been hidden,
Reaching and illuminating like sunlight every corner of the universe.

³¹⁴ Translation by Patricia Fister. “Enshōji Imperial Convent,” 100.

³¹⁵ Suenaga Masao, “Zenni, Daitsū Daishi: Bunchi joō,” *Ryūtan shidan* 44 (December, 1958): 7-9. On Bunchi's biography and devotional activities, see Suenaga Masao and Nishibori Ichizō, ed., *Bunchi Nyoō* (Obitoke, Nara: Enshōji, 1955) and Patricia Fister, “Creating Devotional Art with Body Fragments: The Buddhist Nun Bunchi and Her Father, Emperor Gomizuno-o,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 27, no. 3-4 (2000): 213-238.

Cherishing the legacy of Gautama's followers,
She forsook the splendors of the great capital;
Wearing a surplice personally received from the emperor,
Under the capital skies, a wisteria staff propped at her side,
She set out to revive the teaching brought from the West.
Here she manifests her illusory self in the light of the precious mirror,
Tracing its ugliness out with her brush and inscribing a word or two.
While watching over the Western Hills,
And assuming the name Tokugon,
While listening to the flowing water,
And calling to the moon in the sky,
She enters the idleness of old age.³¹⁶

Reading the inscription, one senses the longevity portrait was painted as a testament to Hongakuin no miya's awakening. Indeed, the creation of longevity portraits were often related to milestone achievements in one's life.³¹⁷ With text, Hongakuin no miya summarized her path from imperial princess to devout follower of Buddhism. She used language common to portrait inscriptions that exalted the teachings of Zen while emphasizing her own spiritual awakening.³¹⁸ The opening lines recalled those from the Heart Sutra, which explains the nonduality of form and emptiness as perceptions of nonexistence/existence.³¹⁹

No matter whether the shape is formless or possessed of form,
There's no need for you to fall back three thousand leagues,
It's staring you in the face right now, has never once been hidden,
Reaching and illuminating like sunlight every corner of the universe.

These words form the crux of the passage on religious awakening, emphasizing the instant enlightenment heralded in Zen doctrine. The abbess highlights the religious path she has followed after "Gautama's followers" which has led her away from a courtly lifestyle.

³¹⁶ Translation by Fister, "Hōkyōji Imperial Convent," 74.

³¹⁷ Brinker, *Zen Masters of Meditation*, 86.

³¹⁸ Lippit, "Awakenings," 36.

³¹⁹ Donald S. Lopez, *The Heart Sutra Explained: Indian and Tibetan Commentaries* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), 57-94.

The lines, “Here she manifests her illusory self in the light of the precious mirror, Tracing its ugliness out with her brush and inscribing a word or two” are particularly self-referential. They refer at once to the act of painting itself, as Hongakuin no miya looked in a mirror to achieve her likeness, and also to the convent, the name of which means “Temple of the Precious Mirror.” The double entendre extends to suggest that she, too, as abbess, is manifested in the [temple] of the precious mirror. Her “illusory” self evokes the painted representation put down on silk as well as the “formless” being that is the awakened one, who has realized “form is emptiness, and emptiness is form.” At the same time, her “form” – her body – occupies the physical space of the temple. Committing to painting her “ugliness,” i.e. her true, unidealized self, she acknowledges the completion of her “self” through her inscription. The inclusion of her name in the inscription is a particularly important device to identify the sitter. The naming in the text unequivocally identifies who the figure is and demands recognition of her painted form. Hongakuin no miya, in effect, informs the viewer that the painted image *is* Tokugon [Rihō].

The end of the inscription suggests that Hongakuin no miya, having achieved awakening, has entered the next phase of her life, “the idleness of old age.” In actuality, this was most likely a literary conceit used to highlight the milestone she had recently achieved. Hongakuin no miya was forty-one when she wrote the inscription. For the next eighteen years she remained active in renovating Hōkyōji, finding, and then educating her successor. In 1723, ten years after she painted her portrait, she had the retreat called Kogetsutei (呼月亭, lit. Moon Calling Pavilion) built on the grounds of Daijūin. Eight years later she retired from the abbacy and lived at Kogetsutei until she died at age seventy-four in 1745.

Portraits of Gen’yō

Abbess Shōzan Gen’yō of Rinkyūji, who, like Hongakuin no miya, was regarded during her lifetime and in the present-day as a prolific and talented painter, painted numerous self-portraits, one of which is now in the temple of Sennyūji. (Fig. 3.5)³²⁰ In her painting, Gen’yō is seated on a tatami dais with colorful, striped edging, a setting that befits her status as an aristocrat. Dressed in robes and surplice, she faces left and clasps her hands together in front of eight scrolls of the Lotus Sutra bundled on a low table set before her. Her face has wrinkles at the eyes and jowls; she wears a serene expression. Unlike Hongakuin no miya’s portrait, the

³²⁰Fister, “Rinkyūji Imperial Convent,” in *Amamonzeki jūin no sekai*, 108. Three extant self-portraits of Gen’yō can be found in the collections of Sennyūji, Jianji 地安寺 and Jōkōji 淨光寺. The latter two temples are in Shiga Prefecture. Idem, *Art by Buddhist Nuns*, 53.

self-inscription was not originally scripted on the painting but was brushed on a separate piece of paper and adhered to it:

Old, but not yet decrepit,
Facing death without difficulty,
Work accomplished, vows fulfilled,
The remaining years are entrusted to fate.³²¹

The text is her death poem (*yuike* 遺偈), written shortly by the abbess before she died, which suggests Gen'yō's self-portrait was also painted toward the end of her life.³²²

A younger Gen'yō is depicted in a portrait that remains in the collection of Shōmyōji 正明寺, a temple in Shiga Prefecture founded by Gen'yō's preceptor, Ryōkei 龍溪. (Fig. 3.6) In this painting, Gen'yō is seated in a traditional *chinsō* pose: she sits in low-backed chair and faces left. Her hands are hidden under her plain-colored robes and surplice, and her feet are tucked up under her robes. Her shoes rest on a low footstool before her. Donated to Shōmyōji by Jishō Shōkei 慈章性圭 (d. 1694), a nun who may have served Gen'yō, the portrait may have been painted to venerate the Rinkyūji abbess or memorialize the connection between Shōkei and Gen'yō.³²³

A third portrait of Gen'yō is kept at Manpukuji 万福寺, the head temple of the Ōbaku school, with which Gen'yō was closely affiliated as a devout follower of Ōbaku teachings.³²⁴ (Fig. 3.7) The composition of this portrait is similar to the one at Shōmyōji. The abbess is seated in a low-backed chair, facing left. Her russet-colored surplice is joined with an elaborately tied rope and black ring.³²⁵ In all three portraits, Gen'yō appears to be wearing the same surplice. As in self-portrait, Gen'yō's face in the Manpukuji painting is lined with wrinkles. Indeed, the similarities between the visages and clothing suggest the Manpukuji painting may have been copied after her self-portrait.

³²¹ Translation by Patricia Fister, "Rinkyūji Imperial Convent," 109.

³²² Fister, *Art By Buddhist Nuns*, 53.

³²³ Fister speculates Shōkei may have painted the portrait as well. "Rinkyūji Imperial Convent," 109.

³²⁴ Uji-shi Rekishi Shiriyokan, ed. *Ingen tōrai: Kōshōji to Manpukuji* (Uji-shi: Uji-shi Rekishi Shiriyokan, 1996), 49.

³²⁵ The ring in the Shōmyōji portrait is white, and that of the self-portrait is black. The rope knots are different in each portrait.

While there is no documentary evidence explaining why Hongakuin no miya and Gen'yō chose to paint their own portraits, Fister speculates Hongakuin no miya may have been concerned about the legacy of Hōkyōji and wanted to control how she would be memorialized in her afterlife.³²⁶ Additionally, Hongakuin no miya may have wanted to memorialize her moment of awakening to recognize the milestone she had achieved. Both she and Gen'yō were accomplished painters who were well-suited to painting their own portraits as they had experience painting other *chinsō*. Gen'yō painted many portraits of her father, Emperor Gomizunoo and donated them to temples patronized by him or his teacher, Ryōkei, including Manpukuji, (Fig. 3.8) Sennyūji, Unryūin 雲龍院 in Kyoto, Jianji, Jōkōji, and Keizuiji 慶瑞寺 in Takatsuki.³²⁷ Hongakuin no miya painted a *chinsō* of Mugaku Sogen, the teacher of Mugai Nyodai, which remains in the Hōkyōji collection. (Fig. 3.9) As the teacher of Mugai Nyodai, Mugaku Sogen was an important personage in the history of Hōkyōji. Hongakuin no miya may have painted the portrait to venerate him as such. An entry in the *Keiai kaisan Shiju gan Shōmyaku sōken Nyodai Oshō den* 景愛開山資壽願正脈建如大和尚伝 [Biography of Abbess Mugai Nyodai] compiled by Hongakuin no miya and kept in the Hōkyōji archives, records that Nyodai had a *chinsō* portrait of Mugaku made, which the Zen master inscribed. While speculative, it is possible that Hongakuin no miya's *ma chinsō* have been a copy this portrait, perhaps to replace a damaged or worn painting.³²⁸

In the self-portrait painted by Hongakuin no miya, her physical appearance, the standardized composition in which she positioned herself, and the inscription work together to identify the abbess. As a longevity portrait, the abbess had the ability to shape her “appearance” and direct how she would be remembered. The biographical information on the inscription and role it played (and plays) in memorial services suggest that the painting was initiated by the abbess, herself, rather than at the behest of a disciple or parishioner, for future generations to see. As a self-portrait, the power of Hongakuin no miya's image lies in the projection of self and the reception of that image by later viewers.

The *Raichō* Hanging Scroll: Painting as Education and the Kano Connection

In addition to figure painting, Hongakuin no miya also expressed her artistic talents with other types of paintings. A hanging scroll in ink and light colors of a *raichō* 雷鳥

³²⁶ Fister, “Rinkyūji Imperial Convent,” 75.

³²⁷ Fister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns*, 51.

³²⁸ On the *Keiai kaisan Shiju gan Shōmyaku Sōken Nyodai Oshō den*, see Nishiyama Mika, “Keiaiji, Hōjiin monzeki,” in *Amamonzeki no jiin sekai*, 54-59; and the English translation, “Keiaiji and Hōjiin Imperial Convents,” 60-61.

(ptarmigan or snow grouse) (31.5 x 24.9 cm) by the abbess in the Hōkyōji collection exemplifies her ease with subject matter that was not overtly devotional in nature. The painting depicts a meticulously detailed ptarmigan standing erect on a pine branch amid the scattered characters of a poem. (Fig. 3.10) As such, it falls into the genres of Bird and Flower pictures (*kachōga* 花鳥画) and Poem-Paintings (*uta-e* 歌絵). The bird is articulated with fine, even strokes, set against subtle and varying shades of ink which define overhanging pine needles with calligraphy interspersed between the upper pine branches and blank space in front of the bird. The modulation of ink throughout the composition is well-balanced. The dense brushwork that defines the bird's head, neck, and back draws the eye to the center of the painting, while dark ink accents radiate out from the center in the brushstrokes that define the upper branches and the lower branch, as well as the calligraphy at the top and bottom of the left-side of the painting. Color is limited to a touch of red pigment that articulates the ptarmigan's distinctive crest over its eyes. White pigment also defines the end feathers on the bird's wings, brightening the middle register of the composition. While the scroll is in relatively good condition, worm holes are apparent throughout the painting.

Although the *Ptarmigan* scroll displays Hongakuin no miya's mastery of the brush, her attention to the details of the features of the bird renders the composition static. The confident hand used to define the feathers belies the stiff positioning of the bird and the awkward integration of the bird with the branch upon which it stands. The overly formal description of the bird, however, is offset by the cursive rendering of the tree on which it stands and the dynamic characters of the poem. From the finely detailed lines of the bird to the loosely defined articulation of the tree branch and the confident characters of calligraphy, the work both seems to reflect Hongakuin no miya's artistic education and her interest in *waka* poetry.

***Raichō* as Bird and Flower Painting**

The depiction of a single bird perched on a pine branch places Hongakuin no miya's painting unmistakably in the genre of Bird and Flower pictures. Bird and flower motifs in Japan existed as early as the fourth century on objects brought from the Chinese mainland, and with the introduction of Song Dynasty paintings with a Bird and Flower theme in the fourteenth century have become a common genre in Japanese art.³²⁹ The Bird and Flower

³²⁹ Kyoto Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, ed. *Kachō no bi, kaiga to ishō: tokubetsu tenrankai* [A special exhibition of the beauty of birds and flowers: paintings and designs] (Kyoto: Kyōto Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, 1982), 41. For a detailed study of the genre in China and its impact on Japanese painting, see Toda Teisuke and Ogawa Hiromitsu, ed. *Chūgoku no kachōga to Nihon* [Chinese Bird and Flower Paintings and Japan] (Tokyo: Gakushū Kenkyūsha, 1983).

theme has been interpreted differently by artists of various schools at different times in history. By the seventeenth century, it had become a major motif seen on both large-scale formats such as *fusuma* and folding screens, as well as in smaller hanging scrolls and albums. While Hongakuin no miya may have seen Bird and Flower paintings by Chinese artists, more likely she saw copies of Chinese works by Japanese painters and original Japanese compositions. Indeed, she may have had to look no farther than her painting teacher, Kano Chikanobu 狩野周信 (1660-1728), the third head of the Kano Kobikichō 木挽町 branch.³³⁰

By the mid-eighteenth century, the Kobikichō was one of four designated *Oku-eshi* 奥絵師 Kano branches, the highest-ranked painters in the employ of the shogunate. Hongakuin no miya's association with the head of the branch confirms her own high status as an imperial princess and imperial nun.³³¹ As a painter working for the bakufu, Chikanobu worked on

³³⁰ Sawada, *Nihon gaka jiten* (Tokyo: Kigensha, 1927), 467. Chikanobu was also known as 右近 Ukon, 如川 Josen, and 泰寓齋 Taigūsai.

³³¹ The other three branches were the Kajibashi 鍛冶橋, Nakabashi 中橋, and Hamachō 浜町. The names of the branches referred to the locations of mansions granted to the heads of the schools by the shogun in 1621, 1630, and 1707, respectively. Naonobu was granted a mansion in Takegawachō in 1630, and was later given another mansion in Kobikichō, from which the branch took its name. How Kano branches received *oku-eshi* status is distinguished differently by present-day art historians. Sasaki Jōhei claims that the privilege of receiving a mansion, being given the right to wear double swords, have an audience with the shogun, and receive hereditary titles and grants indicated *oku-eshi* status. See Sasaki, "The Era of the Kano School," *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 4 (1984): 651-652. By these standards, the Kobikichō received *oku-eshi* status in 1630. Yukio Lippit dates the reception of *oku-eshi* status to individual heads of the four branches much later, from the eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. Lippit thus claims the Kobikichō branch did not have *oku-eshi* status – the right to a shogunal audience – until 1763, when Kano (Eisen) Michinobu 狩野栄川典信(1730-1790), the sixth generation head, was granted it. See Lippit, "The Birth of Japanese Painting History: Kano Artists, Authors, and Authenticators of the Seventeenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2001), 64, note 82. For ranks of individual Kano school artists and the dates of conferral of *oku-eshi* status, see Kono Motoaki, "Edo Kano Zakkō" [Miscellaneous considerations of the Edo Kano], *Kobijutsu* 71 (1984): 25. While Chikanobu may not have had *oku-eshi* status in his lifetime, he still held considerable prestige as head of a major branch of the Kano school.

reconstructions of both the imperial palace in Kyoto and Edo Castle.³³² In recognition of his talent and as the head of the Kobikichō he received special privileges from the shogunate. In 1630 he received a bonus stipend of *jūnin fuchi* 十人扶持 (an annual allocation of rice adequate for ten people), and in 1722 achieved the rank of *Hōgen* 法眼 (Eye of the Law), the second highest honor for an artist awarded by the imperial court.³³³

The association between imperial Buddhist convents, the imperial family, and the Kano school ran deep in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; their presence at Hōkyōji in scrolls, wall paintings, and in person constitutes a significant artistic influence for early Edo nuns. In addition to Hongakuin no miya, two other imperial women are known to have studied with Kano artists. Tōfukumon'in, the principal consort of Go-mizunoo, studied painting with Kano Nobumasa 狩野信政 (1607-1658).³³⁴ Nobumasa was the second-generation head of the Saruyachō 猿屋町, an *omote-eshi* branch of the Kano school in Edo.³³⁵ As the brother-in-law

³³² Chikanobu worked on the 1678 construction of the Edo Castle with his father, Tsunenobu. Sawada Akira, *Nihon gaka jiten*, 406. In 1708, he worked on the *chūdan* 中段 of the *naka no ma* 中の間 of the *Tsunegoten*. See *Kinri on'e wari narabi tsubo tsuki chō* [Assignments and measurements of paintings in the imperial palace] in Takeda Tsuneo, *Kanoha kaigashi* [The History of the Paintings of the Kano School] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1995), 328.

³³³ Originally the titles of *Hōkyō* 法橋 (Bridge of the Law), *Hōgen*, and *Hōin* 法印 (Seal of the Law) were given to eminent Buddhist monks. In the twelfth century, the designation was also given to Buddhist sculptors. By the fifteenth century the recipients of the titles were expanded to include scholars, professional painters, and doctors. Hirata Yutaka, *Ebusshi no jidai* [The age of Buddhist Sculptors] (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 1994), 29-33. See also Lippit, "The Birth of Japanese Painting History," 101, note 2.

³³⁴ Takeda Tsuneo, ed., *Tōfukumon'in: Kan'ei bunka sōzō no ushirodate* [Tōfukumon'in: sponsor of the creation of Kan'ei culture], vol. 17: *Nihon o tsukutta hitobito* [People who made Japan] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980), 56.

³³⁵ The *omote-eshi* 表絵師 were the branch families of the higher-ranking *oku-eshi*. While *omote-eshi* were in the employ of the shogunate, they did not have the same shogunal privileges as the *oku-eshi*. Kobayashi Tadashi, "Academizumu no kōzai," in *Edo kaiga shiron* (Tokyo: Ruri Shobō, 1983), 35. There were fourteen *omote-eshi* branches in Edo in addition to the Saruyachō: the Surugadai 駿河台, Saruyachō Bunke 猿屋町代地分家, Shiba Atagoshita 芝愛宕下, Kanda Matsunagachō 神田松永町, Yamashita 山下, Fukagawa Mizuba 深川水場, Okachimachi 御徒士町, Azabu 麻布, Negishi Ogyōnomatsu 根岸御行の松, Tsukiji Odawarachō 築地小田原町, Kanasugi Katamachi 金杉片町, Honjo Midorichō 本所緑町, Inarichō 稲荷町, and the Katsuta 勝田.

of Kano Tan'yū 狩野探幽 (1602-174) and the son of Kano Sōyu Hidenobu 狩野祖酉秀信 (1556-1617), he was well-placed within the Kano hierarchy.³³⁶ Shōzan Gen'yō, an abbot of Rinkyūji, studied with Kano Yasunobu (1613-1685),³³⁷ the younger brother of Tan'yū and the head of the Nakabashi Kano 中橋狩野, which was considered to be the main branch (宗家 *sōke*) of the Kano school.

Two paintings by Chikanobu's father, Kano Tsunenobu 狩野常信 (1636-1713) (active late seventeenth century), the second head of the Kobikichō branch, are recorded as being in Hōkyōji's possession in the late 1800s in an inventory entitled "Hōmotsu torishirabe mokuroku" [Inventory of examined treasures].³³⁸ The paintings by Tsunenobu included a triptych of Fukurokuju 福祿壽, one of the seven lucky gods in Chinese iconography, flanked by two landscapes, and a hanging scroll of the bodhisattva Monju 文殊 (Skt. Mañjuśrī).³³⁹ The presence of the scrolls by Tsunenobu further emphasizes the direct link between the Kano Kobikichō branch and Hōkyōji. The seventh generation head of the same branch, Kano Seisen'in 狩野晴川院 (1795-1846), is also represented in the Hōkyōji collection by a pair of *uchiwa* 団扇 fans decorated with paintings of a rabbit frolicking in waves and cherry

³³⁶ Hidenobu was an adopted son of Kano Shōei 狩野松栄 (1519-1592), who founded the Saruyachō branch.

³³⁷ Fister, "Rinkyūji Imperial Convent," 109.

³³⁸ A copy of the "Hōmotsu torishirabe mokuroku" 宝物取調目録 is kept in the Kyoto Prefectural archives (Kyōto Furitsu Sōgō Shiryōkan). Compiled from surveys headed by the Imperial Household Agency (Kunaichō 宮内庁) and conducted between 1888-1897, the inventory lists "treasures" (*hōmotsu*) at temples and convents in Kyoto as part of the Meiji government's program to designate objects deemed worthy for conservation and display. The project continued an earlier survey conducted of temples and shrines in Kyoto prefecture in 1886 by Okakura Tenshin 岡倉天心 and Yamagata Tokuzō 山懸篤藏. For information about the timeline of inventories conducted at temples and shrines in the early Meiji period, see Christine Guth, "Kokuhō: From Dynastic to Artistic Treasure," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 9 (1996-7): 313-322, especially pages 315-322.

³³⁹ The other objects listed in the "Hōmotsu toshirabe mokuroku" are a hanging scroll attributed to the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279) painter, Ma Yuan 馬遠 (Jp: Ba En, ca. 1160-1235), two paintings attributed to the Ming dynasty (1368 to 1644) painter, Qiu Ying 仇英 (Jp: Kyūei, 1494-1552), and two hanging scrolls by Maruyama Ōkyo 円山応挙 (1733-1795).

blossoms.³⁴⁰ (Fig. 3.11) And Hōkyōji's *hondō* features wall paintings attributed to Kano artists, painted in the early seventeenth century. (Fig. 3.12)

Sketches and paintings from Kano painters are present in other convent collections as well, suggesting nuns were familiar with the artwork, if not the artists themselves. Indeed, a folding screen adorned with paper squares of figures and animals (*oshiebari byōbu* 押絵貼屏風) painted by the head of the Odawaramachi branch of the Edo Kano in the Rinkyūji collection, may have been used as a training device for nuns to copy.³⁴¹ (Fig. 3.13) And Sanjichionji has in its collection a pair of six-panel folding screens painted by Kano Yasunobu 狩野安信 (1613-1685) with the classic Chinese theme of Seven Sages in a Bamboo Grove. (Fig. 3.14)

In addition to being able to view paintings and objects by Kano painters, Hongakuin no miya had the advantage of personal instruction by Chikanobu. While it is unclear exactly how Hongakuin no miya learned from the artist, it is likely that she followed the pattern of copying from Chikanobu's painting examples typical of both professional and amateur Kano students.³⁴² Chikanobu's teaching method is reflected in the teaching style of another of his students, Katō Bunrei 加藤文麗 (1706-1782). Chikanobu taught Bunrei, the son of a daimyo and an amateur painter who was, in turn, the first teacher of Tani Bunchō 谷文晁 (1763-1840),

³⁴⁰ Seisen'in was also known as Kano Osanobu 狩野養信. The motif of rabbits frolicking in waves is based on a story in *Kojiki* [Records of ancient matters] (early eighth century), translated as the Hare of Inaba, in which a hare crosses the ocean on the back of crocodiles, giving the appearance of him walking on waves. For a translation of the story in English, see Donald Philippi, *Kojiki* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 93-95. Yokomizo Hiroko offers alternate origins for the motif. She cites a line from a *nō* song "Chikubushima:" "When the moon's image floats on the ocean, the rabbit runs over the waves" as one possibility. Another is the rabbit as a symbol of fertility and the waves as a symbol to extinguish fires. Both motifs relate to protecting the family. "Motifs and Treasures of the Imperial Convents," in *Amamonzeki jūin no sekai*, 350.

³⁴¹ Takeda, "Miyabi to sono haikai" [Elegance and its setting], in *Kyō no miyabi: Kyū kukai no amamonzeki no meihō wo ichidō ni*, ed. Kasumi Kaikan (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1986), 19. The screen bears the seal, Takumi 内匠, which was the name conferred on the head painter (*chakuryū gaka* 嫡流画家) of the Odawaramachi branch. Takumi here may refer to Kano Hidenobu 狩野秀信 (1588 -1672) or Kano Geki 狩野外記 (1607-1672).

³⁴² Brenda Jordan, "Copying from Beginning to End?" in *Copying the Master and Stealing His Secrets*, ed. Brenda Jordan and Victoria Weston (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 32.

one of the most influential literati painters of the Edo period. Bunchō's early education was marked by Bunrei's strict adherence to the Kano copybook method, which was a reflection of the way Bunrei was taught.³⁴³ In Bunrei's teaching process we can extrapolate how Hongakuin no miya may have been instructed as well.

The copybook, or *funpon* 粉本, method was a technique adopted and employed by the Kano in which students traced and then filled in undersketches repeatedly until the teacher was satisfied with the results. The student could then proceed to the next sketch.³⁴⁴ The approved sketches were gathered together into a *mohon* 模本, a collection of student originals based on the teacher's master copybook. The use of the teacher's copybook portfolio and the creation of the *mohon* helped to perpetuate the standard imagery and techniques of Kano school paintings.³⁴⁵

The Kano copybook system is known mostly today through the writings of the late nineteenth century artists Hashimoto Gahō 橋本雅邦 (1835-1908) and Kawanabe Kyōsai 河鍋曉齋 (1831-1889), from whom the most detailed record of Kano training techniques comes.³⁴⁶ As explained by Gahō, students of Kano teachers followed a progressive schedule of subject matter to paint. First, students mastered the *Okashi gahon*, which included sixty leaves of landscapes and figures in five handscrolls, sketched by Tsunenobu. The average time to complete the *Okashi gahon* was eighteen months. After completion of that task, students studied bird and flower drawings, copying twelve leaves by Tsunenobu, which took about six months. The next subjects were figure paintings from Chinese artists, and finally, Tan'yu's *Kenjō shōji* [Paintings of Chinese sages].³⁴⁷

Painting Model Precedents and Bird and Flower Motifs in the Early Edo Period

Hongakuin no miya's *Raichō* reflects a composition seen in other Kano paintings and in sketches from Chinese painting manuals from which the style originated, a central motif of a bird (or birds) perched on a branch or set among flowers or trees. The composition of a bird

³⁴³ Frank Chance, "In the Studio of Painting Study: Transmission Practices Of Tani Bunchō," in *Copying the Master*, 62.

³⁴⁴ The term *funpon* is often used interchangeably with *edehon* 絵手本 (painting model), painted or woodblock-printed copies of models used by painting students to learn standard forms. Jordan, "Copying from Beginning to End?," 33.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 33. See also Jordan, "Kawanabe Kyōsai's Theory and Pedagogy, in *Copying the Master*, 86-115.

³⁴⁷ Jordan, "Copying from Beginning to End?" 49-50.

perched on a tree branch was a common one, often seen in Chinese painting examples from the mainland, and by itself does not reflect Hongakuin no miya's training in the Kano painting style. Kano painters, however, trained by copying paintings by Chinese artists, and through these copies Hongakuin no miya may have been familiar with Song Dynasty Bird and Flower paintings as well. An example of such a copy is a Bird and Flower painting by the Northern Song Dynasty emperor, Huizong 徽宗 (1082-1135), painted in 1107. (Fig. 3.15) The painting of a dove perched on a flowering peach tree branch in mineral pigments was originally an album leaf but was remounted as a hanging scroll.³⁴⁸ The simple composition of a dove resting on a delicately brushed peach tree branch is included in one of four copybooks, entitled *Kara-e tekagami* 唐絵手鏡 [Chinese painting album] (seventeenth-nineteenth century) in the collection of the Tokyo National Museum. Painted by members of the Kobikichō branch, including Tan'yū, Yasunobu, Tsunenobu, Furunobu 古信 (1696-1731), Korenobu 狩野惟信 (1753-1808), and Naganobu 狩野栄信 (1775-1828), the sketchbooks contain copies of many Chinese paintings from the Song Period used in Kobikichō artist training and as teaching models.³⁴⁹ (Fig. 3.16) It is possible that Hongakuin no miya saw such copies through Chikanobu, who was Tsunenobu's son.

Chikanobu, too, was well-trained in Bird and Flower paintings. A triptych by Chikanobu in the Tokyo National Museum includes two bird and flower hanging scrolls which flank a central scroll of Jurō 寿老, the Daoist god of longevity. (Fig. 3.17) Executed in ink and light color, the left scroll depicts mandarin ducks floating in a lake framed by bamboo, plum, and a rock. The right scroll shows a pair of pheasants beneath a pine branch. (Fig. 3.18) The representation of the birds, placed among the plants, but not fully integrated into the composition with them, and recognizable yet not positioned realistically recalls Hongakuin no miya's composition of the ptarmigan on the branch.³⁵⁰ As symbols of longevity, the rock, bamboo, and pine motifs in the two flanking hanging scrolls link the triptych theme. Moreover, Jurō is surrounded in the central painting by a white deer and a crane, which are also symbols of longevity.³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ The scroll was formerly in the Inoue Collection, but now is in the Setsu Gatodō Collection in Tokyo.

³⁴⁹ *Tokubetsuten Kanō-ha no kaiga* [Painting of the Kano school] (Tokyo: Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, 1979).

³⁵⁰ For example, the pheasant twists his head to look up and back in a manner that is physically impossible.

³⁵¹ William Dreesmann, "A Painting of Jurō by Sesshū Tōyō in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston," *Archives of Asian Art* 34 (1981): 48.

By the eighteenth century, when Hongakuin no miya was active, certain flowers and animals had become associated with particular months or seasons. In Chikanobu's triptych, mandarin ducks were symbolic of winter, and pheasants were indicative of early spring. The connection between certain birds, flowers, and months in Japanese painting can be traced back to the poet Fujiwara Teika 藤原定家 (1162-1241). In his collection of poems entitled *Shui gusō* 拾遺愚草 [Meager gleanings] (1216-1233), Fujiwara Teika included twelve poems each on the subjects of flowers and birds. Each set of poems corresponded to one month. By the seventeenth century, the subjects chosen for the months in Teika's poems had become codified into seasonal markers and visual representations seen in painted albums and hanging scrolls of birds and flowers of the twelve months.³⁵² The bird and flower combinations based on Teika's poems and represented faithfully in twelve-month albums are as follows: first month - willow and bush warbler; second month: cherry and pheasant; third month - wisteria and skylark; fourth month: deutzia and cuckoo; fifth month – reeds, orange (*tachibana*) and water rail; sixth month – pinks (nadeshiko or tokonatsu) and cormorants; seventh month - golden lace and magpie; eighth month – bush clover and geese; ninth month – pampas grass and quails; tenth month – late chrysanthemums and cranes; eleventh month – loquat and plovers; and twelfth month – plum and waterfowl or mandarin ducks. While the bird and flower pairs were certainly not the only combinations employed by Kano artists, and there were other possible combinations of birds and flowers that suggest the seasons, these matched pairs became synonymous with the months in literature and painting.³⁵³

Chikanobu's two Bird and Flower hanging scrolls touch upon the bird and flower conventions of twelve-month paintings initiated by Teika's poetry. Plum, while a symbol of longevity, takes on a seasonal association when paired with mandarin ducks. Pheasants, however, appear in the poem and paintings of the second month, although they are not usually paired with pine. Seen through bird and flower symbolism, the flanking scrolls might represent

³⁵² Edward Kamens, "The Past in the Present: Fujiwara Teika and the Traditions of Japanese Poetry," in *Word in Flower: The Visualization of Classical Literature in Seventeenth-Century Japan*, ed. Carolyn Wheelwright (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1989), 28. For a look at Edo-period visualizations of Teika's Flowers and Birds poems, see Kendall Brown, "Re-Presenting Teika's Flowers and Birds," in *Word in Flower*, 33-53. See also Kobayashi Tadashi and Murashige Yasushi, ed. *Shōsha na sōshokubi: Edo shoki no kachō* [Refined decoration: birds and flowers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries] (Tokyo: Gakushū Kenkyūsha, 1981).

³⁵³ Kamens, "The Past in the Present," 31.

the beginning and the end of the year. With the immortal Jurō in the central hanging scroll, the triptych can be read as an encapsulation of time, the epitome of longevity.

Unlike Chikanobu's triptych, Hongakuin no miya's painting of a *raichō* does not seem to follow conventional representations of pairing certain birds with flowers to evoke a season or literary reference. Although the painting is clearly in the Bird and Flower style, the *raichō* was not a popular bird for model drawing and is not readily found in extant Kano paintings of Birds and Flowers from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³⁵⁴ Rather than depicting a Bird and Flower strictly from a model book, it seems that Hongakuin no miya instead chose to paint a *raichō* to accompany the poem that appears with it in the composition. As a poem-painting, *Raichō* highlights another aspect of Hongakuin no miya's cultural education, *waka* poetry.

***Raichō* as Poem-Painting**

Hongakuin no miya's choice of a seemingly non-standard bird motif may have arisen from the particular poem that appears with the painting. The text on the painting, a poem by ex-emperor Go-Tobain (1180-1239; r. 1184-1198), brushed by Hongakuin no miya's hand, reads:

³⁵⁴ *Raichō* sketches or paintings were not found in texts related to the Kano school or bird and flower paintings in the styles of the Kano, Maruyama-Shijō, or Nagasaki school. See examples of Kano *funpon* in Kono Motoaki, "The Organization of the Kano School of Painting," *Competition and Collaboration: Hereditary Schools in Japanese Culture* [Isabella Stewart Gardner Interdisciplinary Symposium, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 1993] (Boston, MA: Trustees of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 1993), 19-29; Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, *Tokubetsuten Kanō-ha no kaiga = Painting of the Kano School*; Takeda Tsuneo, *Kanōha kaigashi*; and Kinsei Nihon kaiga to gafu, *edehon ten: meiga o unda hanga* [Japanese painting in early modern Japan and illustrated books and painting manuals: woodblock prints that engendered masterpieces], 2 vols., ed. Machida Shiritsu Kokusai Hanga Bijutsukan (Machida: Machida Shiritsu Kokusai Hanga Bijutsukan, 1990). Examples of bird and flower paintings in the Kano style can be seen in Nagata Seiji, *Kachōga = Paintings of Birds and Flowers* (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1990); Kobayashi Tadashi and Murashige Yasushi, ed. *Shōsha na sōshokubi*; Kurokawa Kobunka Kenkyūjo, *Kinsei Nihon no kaiga: Jinbutsu, kachō, sansui* [Paintings in early modern Japan: figures, birds and flowers, and landscapes] (Nishinomiya: Kurokawa Kobunka Kenkyūjo, 1993); and *Bird and Flower Painting: Muromachi, Momoyama, Edo periods* (London: Milne Henderson, 1981).

Hidden in the shadow of a pine on a snowy mountain 白山の松のこかげにかぐろうて
The ptarmigan lives peacefully やすらにすめるらいの鳥かな³⁵⁵

It is an early poem by Go-tobain, written when he was nineteen, as one of one hundred poems chosen by the ex-emperor in 1200 to be read at the first of two poetry gatherings that year.³⁵⁶ On the painting *Raichō*, Hongakuin no miya did not write out the lines of the poem in a linear fashion, but instead started the poem at the top left of the painting surface with the characters “*Shiroyama no matsu no* 白山の松の” written in a flowing, cursive script (*sōsho* 草書). The next phrase of the poem continues to the right of the last character “の” in the previous line with the words “*kokage ni* こかげに.” A new line to the right of that continues downward around a knot in the pine branch upon which the *raichō* stands with the characters “*kagurōte* かぐろうて.” The next phrase from the poem starts from right to left, falling diagonally from between the upper pine branches to the bend in the bird’s neck (*yasura ni sumeru* やすらにすめる). The final words in the poem, “*rai no tori kana* らいの鳥かな,” are not contiguous with the end of this line but are written below the first phrase (*Shiroyama no matsu no*), occupying the bottom left corner of the painting. The calligraphy is therefore roughly organized in the shape of an “X,” with the first line of the poem moving from top left to middle right of the composition, and the second line of the poem starting from the top right and moving to the bottom left. The poem is centered around the characters, “*kokage ni* (in the shadow),” in this configuration.

The style of writing used by Hongakuin no miya is known as *chirashi gaki* 散し書 (scattered writing), written in a cursive (*sōsho* 草書) script, which had been used since the eleventh century.³⁵⁷ Originally associated with the women’s calligraphic style of writing

³⁵⁵ Japanese transcription of the poem provided by Tanaka Masaru, Hōkyōji’s curator. English translation is the author’s. References for the poem by Go-tobain appear in Patricia Fister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns*, 71. The poem appears in the *Go-tobain gyoshū*, a collection of poems written by the ex-emperor. See Terashima Tsuneyo, *Go-tobain gyoshū* (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1997).

³⁵⁶ The gathering was known as *Shōji ninen in shodo hyakushu* 正治二年院初度百首 [The first one hundred verses of Shōji 2, or by its shortened name, *Shodo hyakushu* 初度百首. For details about the participants, significance for poetry development, and political ramifications of this event, see Robert Huey, *The Making of Shinkokinshū* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002), 50-65.

³⁵⁷ For discussion of an early example of integrated painting and calligraphy and the scattered writing style as seen in *The Tale of Genji* and Heian calligraphy manuals, see Yoshiaki

(*onna-de*), *chirashi gaki* was highly regarded during the eleventh century for its immediacy and its expression of emotion and intimacy, which made it suitable for poetry and letters.³⁵⁸ In Hongakuin no miya's *Raichō*, a similar effect takes place as the characters seem to enliven the painting of the bird. The text balances the bird, which is slightly off-center to the right, through the dark ink used for the characters for *Shiroyama* and *rai no tori* on the left side of the painting. The scattered characters also draw the viewer/reader fully into the composition; in order to read the poem, one's eyes moves through the whole painting from the top left corner to the bottom center, over the bird to the top right, then back over the bird to the bottom left corner.³⁵⁹

The importance of *waka* poetry to the abbess is illustrated in a list of precepts Hongakuin no miya wrote to her successor, Richō, when she ascended to the abbacy. Written in a long handscroll entitled *Kochō no yumegatari* 胡蝶の夢語 [Dream account of a butterfly] (1737), now kept at Shinnyōji, the teachings included reminders of daily, monthly, and annual events; the lineage of the convent; and the transmission of records connected to Mugai Nyodai and Sūkenmon'in, the founder of Daijūin.³⁶⁰ Hongakuin no miya also wrote in the precepts to practice *waka* as much as one wanted and to commit favorite poems to memory.³⁶¹ In this way, Hongakuin no miya registered the importance of *waka* as part of one's upbringing and identity as an abbess.

Material reminders of the importance of *waka* and painting to imperial nuns are represented in poem-paintings held in imperial Buddhist convents today. A small poem-

Shimizu, "The Rite of Writing: Thoughts on the Oldest *Genji* Text," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 16 (Autumn, 1988): 54-63. See also Shimizu and Rosenfield, *Masters of Japanese Calligraphy*, 47.

³⁵⁸ Shimizu, "The Rite of Writing," 62.

³⁵⁹ Hongakuin no miya utilized *chirashi gaki* in another work, an illustrated *Genji* incense album, which is the subject of Chapter Four. In the album leaves, each of which depicts one chapter from *The Tale of Genji*, excerpts from the narrative are integrated with scenes from the *Genji*. Some poems start from the right, while others start from the left. Other chapters scatter characters out of line with the excerpt, much like the *Raichō* painting.

³⁶⁰ See Hanafusa Miki, "From Princess to Abbess: The Life Cycle of Imperial Nuns," in *Amamonzeki jūin no sekai*, 122-3. Shinnyōji, a temple founded by Mugai Nyodai in the late Kamakura period, was originally a chapel, and later enlarged in the Muromachi period by Muso Sōseki. It became a subtemple of Shōkokuji. Hongakuin no miya helped to revive it in the early 1700s. Hōkyōji and Daishōji abbesses are buried at Shinnyōji.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

painting by Abbess Shōrei Genshū 松嶺元秀 (1696-1752), crafted while still a novice at Rinkyūji in 1707, the year she entered the convent, depicts three branches of chrysanthemums with yellow, orange, and white flowers, rising from the bottom left corner.³⁶² (Fig. 3.19) A poem by Emperor Kameyama (1249-1305; 4. 1259-1274), written at a chrysanthemum banquet in 1284, also in her hand, fills the upper right and left corners, with the lines of text divided by the flower branches.³⁶³ Another hanging scroll of a bird on a blossoming plum branch painted by Princess Masako (1673-1746) with poem inscribed by Abbess Kōzan Sōei 光山宗栄 (1658-1721) of Reikanji is in the Hōkyōji collection.³⁶⁴ (Fig. 3.20) Sōei added inscriptions to the paintings by other nuns as well; the presence of poem-paintings jointly by her in convent collections today suggest these collaborations were highly valued by later generations of nuns.³⁶⁵

Buddhist Precedents for Paintings with Birds and Flowers and Poems

As seen in multiple examples, the poem-paintings at Hōkyōji and other imperial Buddhist convents reflects the aristocratic upbringing of the nuns. They also reflect a larger current of painting and poetry style perpetuated by members of the court, artisans, and *monzeki* clergy who, adjusting to the shift in political power to the military rulers of the Tokugawa

³⁶² Fūkoin's childhood name was Princess Kame no miya 亀宮 (1696-1752).

³⁶³ Fister, "Imperial Convents as Literary Salons," in *Amamonzeki jin no sekai*, 224.

³⁶⁴ Princess Masako was the third daughter of Emperor Reigen (1654-1732; r. 1663-1687) and his official consort, Takatsukasa Fusako 鷹司房子 (1653-1712). In 1686 she married court noble Nijō Tsunahira 二条綱平 (1672-1732), who served as *kanpaku* from 1722-1726. Abbess Sōei was the older sister of Hongakuin no miya. Their father was Emperor Go-Sai and their mother was Higashi Sanjō no Tsubone Tomoko (d. 1695). Her birth name was Sen no miya 選宮, and her posthumous title is Fūken'in no miya 普賢院宮. The poem on the bird and blossoming plum branch scroll is by Abe no Asomi Hironiwa 安倍朝臣広庭 (659-732). Fister, "Imperial Convents," 224.

³⁶⁵ Sōei and Hongakuin no miya collaborated on at least three text-paintings with Hongakuin no miya contributing the painting and Sōei writing the inscription. Two paintings remain at Reikanji: a painting of Mt. Mikasa with poem by Saionji Kinsuke 西園寺公相 (1223-1267) and a painting of Daruma with inscription by Sōei. On the text-paintings by the two abbesses, see Fister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns*, 73. See also Oka Yoshiko, *Nihon no shūkyō to jendā ni kansuru kokusai sōgō kenkyū*, vol. 3. Reikanji mokuroku. Hongakuin no miya and Sōei also jointly created a "portrait" of the founder of Chūgūji, Empress Anahobe no Hashihito (d. 621). See Monica Bethe, "Chūgūji Imperial Convent," in *Amamonzeki jin no sekai*, 47.

government, allied themselves through the arts with the aristocratic leaders of centuries past.³⁶⁶ The syncretic nature of the courtly arts of the early Edo period is succinctly characterized by Yoshiaki Shimizu and John Rosenfield:

A strong courtly flavor pervades the calligraphy of this epoch (Momoyama (1568-1603)-first four decades of the Edo period (1603-1868)) because many of the best writers were associated with the Kyoto aristocracy and were consciously seeking to revive the patrician elegance of the Heian court. The renewed passion for putting the finest writing on richly decorated papers offers exquisite testimony to this spirit of revival. Courtly values are not the only elements present, however; the Zen monasteries and Chinese learning remained powerful sources of cultural inspiration. The calligraphy of this revival movement was a synthesis of the characteristically Japanese forms of the Heian period with the Chinese-influenced forms of the Kamakura and Muromachi periods.³⁶⁷

The presence of Bird and Flower paintings, calligraphy of *waka* poetry, and poem-paintings by imperial Buddhist nuns suggest secular and devotional art cannot be neatly divided and addressed as separate art historical categories. The precedence for so-called secular painting – those that do not bear a direct reference to Buddhist material – painted by Buddhist clerics was set in China during the flourishing of the Lin-chi (Pinyin Linji; Jp. Rinzai 臨濟) sect, which had a great following in Japanese during the Kamakura and Muromachi periods as Rinzai Zen. As Yoshiaki Shimizu and John Rosenfield explain, “In the large Wan-shou-ch’an-ssu atop Mt. Ching, monks were allowed to pursue poetry, painting, and calligraphy—some of it highly secular in character—as legitimate expressions of Buddhist insights; the best-known of these monks were the abbot Wu-chun Shih-fan (1178-1249), whose pupils played an especially important role in transplanting Lin-chi traditions to Japan, and Mu

³⁶⁶ John Rosenfield, *Extraordinary Persons: Works by Eccentric, Nonconformist Japanese Artists of the Early Modern Era (1580-1868) in the Collection of Kimiko and John Powers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums, 1999), 115. See also Elizabeth Lillehoj, “Introduction,” in *Critical Perspectives on Classicism*, 8. On the revival of the emperor’s relevance to the politics and culture of the late Muromachi and early Edo periods, see Butler, *Emperor and Aristocracy*.

³⁶⁷ Shimizu and Rosenfield, *Masters of Japanese Calligraphy*, 204.

Ch'i (d. ca. 1280-1291), whose paintings preserved in Japan were studied and copied by generations of artists."³⁶⁸

Helmut Brinker has explained the presence of nature motifs in paintings by Zen cleric painters as representative of the “manifestation of the Buddha Nature unique in itself and yet encompassing the whole universe,” which suggests the Buddha is everywhere, present in the most profane or common object.³⁶⁹ While Brinker’s assessment may be over simplifying large categories of motifs, certain birds and flower motifs appear often in Zen paintings and have numinous and ritual significance in the Buddhist context. Andrew Watsky has explored the numinous meaning of grapevine, flower, and crane and pine motifs in his study of the decoration of a mortuary temple.³⁷⁰ And Gregory Levine has examined the ritual and institutional significance of the painting program of birds and flowers in the abbot’s quarters of the Daitokuji subtemple, Jūkoin.³⁷¹ Flower and bird motifs were sometimes seen in paintings by clerics trained in both calligraphy and ink painting. The Buddhist priest Daishin Gitō 大心義統 (1657-1730), for example, a contemporary of Hongakuin no miya, painted a hanging scroll of ink on paper of a poem in semi-cursive script opposite a blossoming plum branch. (Fig. 3.21) Unlike the rendition of the plum branch in Princess Masako’s painting, which was detailed in mineral pigments, Gitō’s branch is articulated in a dynamic sweep of the brush, which follows the ink as it dries on the paper from the deep, saturated tone on the left edge of the paper to the sketchy, almost-dry traces at the branch’s tip. The outlines of a few blossoms along the branch suggest the tree to be plum.

The poem accompanying the illustration distinctly references Buddhist beliefs in nature:

The benevolent fragrance permeates all things;
Can it be that each blossom is the reincarnation of the Buddha?³⁷²

In his painting, Gitō utilized a common flower motif – the blossoming plum branch – and illuminated it as a numinous motif through a poetic inscription of overt Buddhist reference.

Another example of an inscribed flower painting is by the Buddhist priest and painter-calligrapher, Sengai Gibon 仙厓義梵 (1750-1837), who painted a hanging scroll of ink on

³⁶⁸ Yoshiaki Shimizu and John M. Rosenfield, *Masters of Japanese Calligraphy: 8th – 19th Century* (New York: Asia Society Galleries and Japan House Gallery, 1984), 113.

³⁶⁹ Brinker and Kanazawa, *Zen Masters in Meditation*, 56.

³⁷⁰ Watsky, *Chikubishima*, 101-142.

³⁷¹ Levine, “Jūkoin.”

³⁷² Translation by Shimizu and Rosenfield in *Masters of Calligraphy*, 170-171.

paper of chrysanthemums, with the inscription, “By the eastern hedge/A bit of autumn lingers.”³⁷³ (Fig. 3.22) The text refers to a poem written by the Chinese poet Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365-427), whose lifestyle as a Chinese literati greatly inspired Sengai.³⁷⁴ Although the text is not devotional in nature, Sengai may have included it as a reference to his own life after abbacy, in which he secluded himself in a hermitage on Shōfukuji’s grounds.³⁷⁵

Although the vast corpus of priest text-paintings cannot be addressed in depth in this paper, the two examples illustrate the range of Buddhist paintings that incorporate nature imagery. Sengai was a high-ranking Zen abbot who drew from many sources to teach lay followers and fellow monks through his paintings and writings about practicing Rinzai Zen, infusing his work with his own interests and personality. Gitō, on the other hand, utilized a common tree as a Buddhist parable. The connections between the motif, painting style, and the text are varied and, as exemplified here, personal to the artist. In the same way, the presence of a poem-painting in an imperial Buddhist convent, rather than simply recalling the upbringing of the abbess’ life, reflects the interrelatedness of seemingly different inspirations in aristocratic nuns’ lives.

Nyorai, Nyorai: Calligraphy and Devotional Practice

Discussion of Hongakuin no miya’s artistic output would not be complete without examination of an example of her calligraphy. The abbess was a well-known calligrapher during her lifetime and specialized in large character brushwork. Her devotional scripts, repetitious acts of writing, and commissioned works contribute to her identity as abbess and as artist. With a hanging scroll in the collection of Hōkyōji as a starting point, the following discussion focuses on Hongakuin no miya’s calligraphy.

A large hanging scroll (104.5 x 30.2 cm) in the collection of Hōkyōji depicts the large-scale characters 如来くく (*Nyorai Nyorai*), one of the Buddha’s epithets, in vertical script.³⁷⁶ (Fig. 3.23) Writing the name of a Buddhist deity figure (*myōgō* 名号) in a single line of characters (*ichigyō* 一行) was a devotional act that transformed the name of the Buddha into an icon. The writing of and devotional use of *myōgō* has long had a presence in Japanese

³⁷³ Ibid., 186. Sengai was the abbot of Shōfukuji 聖福寺, a Rinzai Zen monastery in Hakata, Kyushu, from 1789-1811.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ *Nyorai* is one of the ten epithets of Buddha. It refers to the corporeal body, or manifestation body, of the Buddha.

calligraphy; in the Zen calligraphic tradition, it dates back to the fourteenth century.³⁷⁷ The visibility and strong visual effect of the large characters lend themselves to display in public spaces, where they can be the focal point of incantations or prayers.

On *Nyōrai Nyōrai*, written by Hongakuin no miya with a large brush on undyed paper, the name of the Buddha dominates much of the composition, with the repeat marks (< <) occupying the lower third of the painting. Characteristic of much of the abbess' calligraphy, the name was brushed with mostly unmodulated ink in a semi-cursive script. Completed in a fluid movement, the abbess was able to achieve strength and vitality through the thick, saturated ink from her large brush, as well as spontaneity and suppleness through the rounded brushstrokes and fluid movement throughout the characters, *nyo* and *rai*. The abbess lifted her brush lightly between the two characters, revealing the white space within the line of her brushstroke, but without losing the continuity of the Buddha's name.³⁷⁸ The repeat marks below the characters further animate the calligraphy as they are placed diagonally across the lower third of the scroll. Of uniform thickness, they clearly show the fibers of the brush as Hongakuin no miya paused at the top of each stroke, pooling ink and leaving trails of the brush hairs. The scroll is in very good condition overall, with only slight creases on the bottom of the paper below the ink of the bottom character. Three of the abbess' seals are also placed on the scroll; on the left side is her name "Tokugon" in red square intaglio and below that is her artist seal in red square relief. On the top right side is a longer red rectangular intaglio seal.

The size of *Nyorai Nyorai* and the writing of the Buddha's name with repeat marks suggest it might have been displayed for incantation rituals. While there is no documentation at Hōkyōji referring to the particular use of the scroll, Hongakuin no miya is known to have brushed *myōgō* in large characters upon request or as donations. A hanging scroll (104.8 x 45.2 cm) also by the abbess, now at Myōrenji 妙蓮寺, a Nichiren school temple in Kyoto, displays the names of female Buddhist deities, *Kishimojin* 鬼子母神 (Skt. Hārītī) and *Jūrasetsunyo* 十羅刹女 (Skt. Rākṣasī).³⁷⁹ (Fig. 3.24) Both deities were important in Nichiren

³⁷⁷ Shimizu and Rosenfield, *Masters of Japanese Calligraphy*, 140.

³⁷⁸ The technique of lifting the brush partly off the paper to reveal the lines left from the brush tip is called "flying white" (Jp. *hihaku* 飛白; Ch. *feibai*). It can be seen on works of calligraphy dating back to the Later (or Eastern) Han period (25-220 CE) when it originated with Cai Yang 蔡邕 (Jp. Sai Yō; 132-192). Nishibayashi Shōichi, *Chūgoku shodō bunka jiten* (Kyoto: Yanagihara Shuppan, 2009), 784.

³⁷⁹ Fister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns*, 58-59.

teachings as protectors of women and children.³⁸⁰ Of similar dimensions to *Nyorai Nyorai*, the hanging scroll depicts the deities in two vertical lines of semi-cursive script. The characters of their names fill most of the blank space of the large paper in even lines; the dark, thick ink of the *ki* and *jin* characters of *Kishimojin* on the right of the composition and the *jū* and the *nyo* characters of *Jūrasetsunyo* on the left side anchor the characters while the thinner cursive strokes of the middle characters lighten and enliven the composition. Each character is distinct from the others yet connected through the movements of the strokes. The technical skill involved in producing the large characters showcases the two names, emphasizing the importance of these female deities in the *Lotus Sutra*.

Ōbaku Calligraphy and Hongakuin no miya

Hongakuin no miya's education as a painter and *waka* enthusiast has been discussed earlier in the chapter. While she – as was typical of elite women during the Edo period – received education in calligraphy, her large-scale calligraphy was also informed by her Ōbaku studies. As a student of Hyakusetsu, Hongakuin no miya most likely was familiar with his calligraphy. Hyakusetsu Gen'yō was a well-regarded painter, poet, and calligrapher in his own right, but there is no indication that Hongakuin no miya studied directly with him. Examples of Hyakusetsu's calligraphy, two single-line texts that depict the sayings, “The plateau is cold; the cypress trees green,” and “The river is warm; the willow branches yellow” display brushstrokes that do not flow smoothly, but instead invigorate with their “internal dissonance.”³⁸¹ (Fig. 3.25) With a fine brush, cursive script, and modulated strokes, Hyakusetsu conveys the opposing thoughts expressed in the text as a unified composition; the characters may be individually energized, but they pivot around the central characters for the trees (cypress and willow), which

³⁸⁰ Kishimojin was originally a demon with one hundred children who killed other children to feed her own. When taught by Sakyamuni the suffering a mother endured when her child was lost, she became a protector of children and easy childbirth. The *Jūrasetsunyo* were ten daughters of flesh-eating demons who accompanied Kishimojin to visit the Buddha and vowed to guard those who upheld the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*. Burton Watson, trans. *The Lotus Sutra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 309-310. On *Jūrasetsunyo* imagery and the iconography of *Fugen Jūrasetsunyo*, see Nicole Fabricand-Person, “Demonic Female Guardians of the Faith: The *Fugen Jūrasetsunyo* Iconography in Japanese Buddhist Art,” in *Engendering Faith*, 343-382.

³⁸¹ John Rosenfield, *Extraordinary Persons*, 238. Translation of the pair of scrolls is by Fumiko Cranston, *Ibid*.

are darker and bolder than the rest of the characters. As seen in these scrolls, Hyakusetsu's brushwork is lighter, more angular, and more frenetic than Hongakuin no miya's.

It is also possible the abbess saw other works by Ōbaku priests and observed their painting styles as well. In her calligraphy, different aspects of large-character calligraphy practiced by both Chinese and Japanese monks are evident. With her preference for thick, unmodulated brushstrokes, Hongakuin no miya's calligraphy is closer in style to Mokuan Shōtō 木庵性瑫 (Ch. Muan Xingtao, 1611-1684) and Sokuhi Nyoitsu 即非如一 (Ch. Jifei Ruyi, 1616 - 1671). Both men were disciples of Ingen Ryūki 隱元隆琦 (Ch. Yinyuan Longqi, 1592-1673), the first patriarch of Ōbaku Zen in Japan. Mokuan journeyed to Japan from China in 1654 at the behest of his Zen master and helped found the head Ōbaku temple, Manpukuji 萬福寺, in Uji in 1656. He became its second abbot in 1664.³⁸² Sokuhi went to Japan in 1657 and became the abbot of Sōfukuji 崇福寺 in Nagasaki. He later founded the temple Fukujuji 福聚寺 in Fukuoka. Both men were renowned for their brush skills and within their lifetimes were known as two of the “Three Brushes of Ōbaku;” the third was Ingen.

Mokuan's calligraphic style consisted of mostly large-character texts of uniform brushstrokes that filled the writing space in coordinated arrangement.³⁸³ His hanging scroll, *Longevity Mountain: Flourishing a Thousand Ages* (ca. 1665), exemplifies his style. (Fig. 3.26) The five characters are free of extraneous brush movement with the blunt edges achieved through the use of a flat-tipped brush; they appear forceful and bold. Sokuhi also favored uniform lines and balanced characters. A pair of hanging scrolls with the single-line texts, “Ocean of Good Fortune” and “Mountain of Longevity” shows his characteristic brushwork. (Fig. 3.27) Unlike the angular, blocky lines of Mokuan's calligraphy, Sokuhi's strokes curve and taper. Moreover, the strokes of the two characters echo in shape, the end curving back to the center of the scrolls. The single-line text bears the same dynamism and power of Hongakuin no miya's large character scrolls. Yet, it is important to note that while Hongakuin no miya may have shared a penchant for dynamic, flowing characters evident in the brushwork of the early Ōbaku patriarchs, her brush style is uniquely her own.

As is evident in the *Nyorai Nyorai* and *Kishimōjin, Jūrasetsunyo* hanging scrolls, Hongakuin no miya was comfortable working with a large brush and was adept at different brush techniques. In extant works, it is apparent she favored dark, unmodulated ink, which seemed to energize her writings with internal strength and integrity. Her brush strokes are

³⁸² Ingen was the first abbot.

³⁸³ On Mokuan's style, which Stephen Addiss has described as “carefully orchestrated compositions” for their balance of line and space, see Addiss, *The Art of Zen: Painting and Calligraphy by Japanese Monks, 1600-1925* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1989), 82-83.

rounded, which give her characters a suppleness and dynamism. The thick characters are balanced and even, giving the impression of stability and solidity. These elements of her brush technique may have made her calligraphy desirable for temple name plaques and other large-scale hangings; numerous examples of both remain extant in temples throughout the country.

Acts of Repetition: Devotional Calligraphy and the Distribution of Hongakuin no miya's Brush

Writing *myōgō* upon request or for parishioners was not unusual for Zen priests and abbesses. The act of producing multiple copies of images of the Buddha was a practice associated with the Lotus Sutra, which advocated that creating images of the Buddha was a way to accumulate merit and attain awakening:

If there are persons who for the sake of the Buddha fashion and set up images,
carving them with many distinguishing characteristics,
then all have attained the Buddha way.
Or if they make things out of the seven kinds of gems, of copper, red or white copper,
pewter, lead, tin, iron, wood, or clay, or use cloth soaked in lacquer or resin
to adorn and fashion Buddha images,
then persons such as these have all attained the Buddha way.
If they employ pigments to paint Buddha images,
endowing them with the characteristics of hundredfold merit,
If they make them themselves or have others make them,
then all have attained the Buddha way.
Even if little boys in play should use a piece of grass or wood or a brush,
Or perhaps a fingernail to draw an image of the Buddha,
Such persons as these bit by bit will pile up merit
and will become fully endowed with a mind of great compassion;
they all have attained the Buddha way.³⁸⁴

According to the *Hongakuin no miya seikō ryakki* [An abbreviated record of the accomplishments of Hongakuin no miya] (1732), the abbess wrote out 10,500 *myōgō* to distribute to parishioners at the dedication ceremony in 1724 for the sutra pagoda she sponsored at Shinnyōji.³⁸⁵ Hongakuin no miya's practice of creating thousands of *myōgō* at a

³⁸⁴ Burton Watson, trans. *The Lotus Sutra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 39.

³⁸⁵ Oka, "Kinsei no bikuni gosho (jō)," 55.

time was a devotional act. By writing and donating *myōgō* at the dedication ceremony at Shinnyōji, the abbess not only accrued merit for herself but also Mugai Nyodai, for whom the pagoda was built, and the parishioners to whom she gave the *myōgō*.

Apart from *myōgō*, Hongakuin no miya “distributed” examples of her calligraphy as the writer of wooden plaques of mountain or temple names. Temple name plaques were often brushed by clerics, and the practice was enlivened in the seventeenth century by Ōbaku priests.³⁸⁶ Manpukuji, the head Ōbaku Zen temple in Uji, had many large signs written in large characters. The writing of a sign in one’s hand suggests a devotional act of association with the sacred space.

A document entitled *Hongakuin no miya oboegaki* 本学院宮覚書 [Hongakuin no miya memorandum] in the archives of Hōkyōji subtemple, Zenryūji, recorded the requests and completion of calligraphy for 417 wooden plaques by Hongakuin no miya.³⁸⁷ Although Hōkyōji was a Rinzai Zen temple, many of the requests came from Shinshū, Tendai, Jōdo, and Hokke temples. Most of these temples were located in Yamashiro, which included the capital, Kyoto, and its surrounding areas.³⁸⁸ Forty-seven temples from Ōmi no kuni 近江国, a neighboring province which corresponds to present-day Shiga Prefecture, requested calligraphy for wooden plaques, making it the province with the next-highest number of requests. And temples as far away as Dewa Province 出羽国 (present-day Yamagata Prefecture) and Tsushima Province 対馬国 (now incorporated into Nagasaki Prefecture) also asked Hongakuin no miya for calligraphy. Only three requests were from convents; the majority of requests were from male temples. Most of the requests were for plaques displaying the name of the temple, but she was also asked to write single-line hanging scrolls for individual priests. Also, Oka lists thirty-one lay people who asked Hongakuin no miya for calligraphy.³⁸⁹ From the wide range of patrons and temples, it is evident that Hongakuin no miya’s calligraphy was very much in demand and her reputation reached beyond the capital.

³⁸⁶ Shimizu and Rosenfield, *Masters of Japanese Calligraphy*, 113. See also, Brinker and Kanazawa, *Zen Masters*, 101-102. See Nishigori Ryōsuke, *Ōbaku Zenrin no kaiga* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2006), 294; and Stephen Addiss, *The Art of Zen: Paintings and Calligraphy by Japanese Monks, 1600-1925* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1989), 78.

³⁸⁷ Oka Yoshiko lists all the temples that have had mountain name or temple name plaques inscribed with Hongakuin no miya’s calligraphy by location in “Nōsho,” 58-65. The following number of requests is based on Oka’s article. See also Fister, “Hōkyōji Imperial Convent,” 75; idem., *Art by Buddhist Nuns*, 59.

³⁸⁸ Oka lists 134 requests from Yamashiro. “Nōsho,” 58-60.

³⁸⁹ Oka, “Nōsho,” 56.

An example of the type of sign Hongakuin no miya brushed is a wooden plaque engraved with calligraphy by the abbess, which hangs on the interior of the entrance to the *hondō* at Daikakuji in Himeji City, Hyōgo prefecture. The plaque displays the calligraphy for Kakuryuzan 鶴立山, the mountain name (*sangō* 山號) of the temple. (Fig. 3.28) The thick, bold strokes convey power but also tranquility, settled by the rounded edges and balanced distribution of ink. Similarly dramatic brushwork can be seen in Hōkyōji's own temple name plaque, also created by the twenty-second abbess, which hangs on the front entrance gate at the convent. (Fig. 3.29)

Although it is unclear how Hongakuin no miya's calligraphy became so popular, Oka speculates it may be because she was the daughter of Emperor Go-sai, which made her writing a form of imperial writing.³⁹⁰ Also, Hongakuin no miya's purported prolificacy resulted in the material objects of many *myōgō* and paintings. The distribution of these works may have helped to raise awareness of her name and reputation around the country.³⁹¹

Oka points to another practical reason why Hongakuin no miya may have honored so many requests for wooden plaque calligraphy. She notes that the abbess was creatively most active during the Kyohō era (1716-1736), which was also the time when she undertook many convent renovations. The timing of these two actions suggests she may have been partly motivated in her calligraphic efforts by the financial benefits of donations given in exchange for the nameplates.³⁹² To recap, the buildings Hongakuin no miya renovated or built included buildings at Daijiin, a subtemple of Hōkyōji with important historical ties to the Ashikaga family and the imperial consort, Sūkenmon'in, and at Shinnyōji. She also made renovations of Hōkyōji in the years leading up to Richō's entrance and succession as abbess. The buildings were thus built at important sites of remembrance and lineage – past and future – for Hōkyōji. Fister rightly suggests the work undertaken by Hongakuin no miya thus may have partly had political undertones.³⁹³ The renovations solidified the connection to prestigious lineages, namely Mugai Nyodai's and Sūkenmon'in, amplifying Hōkyōji's own status. Hongakuin no miya had myriad reasons to create and distribute calligraphy. The result, however, is that her name has become associated with temples around the country through the calligraphy on the signs, helping to build a lasting legacy that reflects on her as an artist and on the convent to which she belonged.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 57.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid. 57.

³⁹³ Fister, "Hōkyōji Imperial Convent," 75.

Conclusion

As seen in anecdotal records, pictures, and writings presented in this chapter, Hongakuin no miya's devotion was closely tied to her dedication to her convent. Administrative duties and religious practice were not discrete, but inextricably intertwined. To say a painting or calligraphy was done as a religious act belies her role as a temple leader or individual charged with perpetuating the convent lineage. In the same way, the idea that Hongakuin no miya may have imbued "secular" paintings with her deep religious beliefs should also be entertained. Although specific devotional aspects may be difficult to identify, it is not possible to separate the artist from the abbess. The three works of art studied in this chapter were chosen to highlight the different social positions Hongakuin no miya undertook as princess and as abbess. It is hoped that by juxtaposing the works of art, it can be emphasized that the roles were not exclusionary, but in fact, were both interrelated components of her life.

The following chapter takes a different approach to the legacy of objects at Hōkyōji. While this chapter focused on the inspirations that guided the creation of devotional and edificial works through which an individual is represented, Chapter Four looks at the materiality of objects and their contribution to the lasting legacy of the nuns/artists who created them. This is not to say only nuns with artistic talent are well regarded at convents, but rather that the display value of objects in this century have shaped the legacy of the nuns at individual convents. The following chapter continues exploration of the topics discussed above through the examination of an object created by Hongakuin no miya. Grounded in the knowledge of the wide range of material and visual culture available to her as discussed above, the chapter focuses on the arc of the object itself; its production, function, and legacy within and without Hōkyōji.

Chapter Four

An Incense Album and its Place in Eighteenth Century Kyoto

Formerly to amuse myself at court I would burn orchid incense;
Now to enter the Zen life I burn my own face.
The four seasons pass by like this,
But who am I amidst the change?
-Ryōnen Gensō³⁹⁴

In the poem written by Ryōnen Gensō (1646-1711), the nun contrasts her former life at court with the new path her life has taken as a disciple of the Ōbaku priest, Hakuō.³⁹⁵ The frivolity of court amusements, like incense, is set against the seriousness of the religious life ahead of her, the difference intensified by the violent act with which she proves her intent to further her religious studies.

The suggestion that the lifestyle of the court was opposite to the Buddhist devotee's path was not indicative of the lifestyle at Hōkyōji. As explored in previous chapters, the visual and material culture at imperial convents were not incongruous or contradictory in the religious setting. Relationships with members of the imperial family, comprehensive education, and roles as religious leaders immersed the women in the convent in a rich and varied cultural life.

³⁹⁴ Mukashi wa kyūri ni asobi ranja o yaku/Ima wa, Zenrin ni itte, menpi o yaku/Shijō ryūkō mata kaku no gotoshi/Shirazu tare ka kore kono uchi ni utsuru o. In Stephen Addiss, ed. *Zen Sourcebook: Traditional Documents from China, Korea, and Japan* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2008), 241. The poem also appears in Bernard Faure, *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford, England: Princeton University Press, 2003), 202; and Patricia Fister, *Japanese Women Artists: 1600-1900* (Lawrence, KS: Spencer Art Museum, 2002), 30. Translation is by Stephen Addiss.

³⁹⁵ In the well-known account of Ryōnen Gensō, the nun wished to pursue studies with Hakuō but was refused; the priest claimed her female appearance would prove too distracting to the monks at his temple. Ryōnen then grabbed a nearby iron and burned her face. Hakuō, realizing the sincerity of her desire to study, then accepted her into his temple. Ryōnen, coincidentally, served at Hōkyōji before leaving to pursue her studies further.

In fact, rather than removing themselves from the outside world and forgoing material trappings of court life, imperial Buddhist nuns, like their counterparts, imperial Buddhist monks, were instead active participants in cultural phenomena taking place in Kyoto during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³⁹⁶

The role of imperial nuns in contributing to and disseminating cultural trends is explored in this chapter through close examination of a *Tale of Genji*-themed painted incense album (*Genji kō no zu* 源氏香の図) created by the twenty-second abbess, Hongakuin no miya, used in the *Genji* incense game and kept in the collection of Hōkyōji, (Fig. 4.1) and other related *Genji*-themed objects.³⁹⁷ Rather than analyzing the vast number of *Genji* pictures and *Genji* scholarship during the Edo period, the discussion here focuses on the significance of *Genji*-related images as filtered through Hongakuin no miya's experience. As a material object, a representative work of art related to *The Tale of Genji*, and as a series of two-dimensional paintings, the album reflects major cultural currents present in Kyoto during the mid-Edo period. The incense album is also a manifestation of Hongakuin no miya's participation (sometimes active, sometimes by association) in iconic circuits of the cultural production of *The Tale of Genji*, the incense game and the perpetuation of court "tradition" through game-playing, as well as her own personal interest in *The Genji*. The album thus straddles the divide between personal effect and social symbol, and examination of it offers a revealing perspective of Hōkyōji's visual culture in eighteenth-century Kyoto.

The interest in things *Genji* among intellectuals and commoners in Kyoto during the Edo period reflects growing public knowledge made possible by better information systems, transgression or opposition to the four-class system imposed by the Tokugawa shogunate through the appropriation of Heian-period aristocratic literature, and cultural unity and dispersal of information. Haruo Shirane rightly points out that "iconic representations" – images, *Genji* names used by courtesans, *Genji*-decorated game accoutrements, and *Genji*-decorated kimono, to name a few – became as important as *Genji* commentaries and digests in

³⁹⁶ The cultural pursuits of imperial Buddhist monks, including Sonjun 尊純 (1591-1653), an abbot at Shōren'in 青蓮院, Dōkō 道晃 (1612-1679), an abbot at Shōgoin 聖護院, and Gyōnen 堯然 (1602-1661), an abbot at Myōhōin 妙法院 are well-documented. See, for example, Oka, *Kan'ei bunka no nettowaku* [Networks of Kan'ei culture] and Kumakura, *Gomizuno'oin*.

³⁹⁷ Perhaps the most celebrated work of Japanese literature, *The Tale of Genji* was written by Murasaki Shikibu (b. 978?), an attendant to the Imperial consort Shōshi (a.k.a. Akiko, 988-1074) around the turn of the eleventh century. English translations of chapter titles and excerpts from *The Tale of Genji* used throughout this chapter are based on Royall Tyler, trans. *The Tale of Genji* (New York: Viking, 2001).

disseminating the Heian-period narrative to samurai and commoners during the Edo period. In this way, *The Tale of Genji* was a sign of cultural sophistication, and knowledge of things *Genji* implied membership in a cultural elite.³⁹⁸

While Hongakuin no miya's album is intriguing for its connection to Edo-period *Genji* trends, it is also significant as a physical reminder of other communities to which abbesses at Hōkyōji belonged. Visual attributes of the album draw attention to the historical aspects of the *Genji* incense game, connecting the abbess to likeminded members of overlapping social groups: aristocrats, incense practitioners, *Genji* enthusiasts, and imperial Buddhist nuns. Aristocratic nuns had an added incentive to continue court culture, utilize their classical literary education, and keep artistic and cultural traditions alive. Analysis of the *Genji* incense album highlights the merging vectors which resulted in cultural continuity with the world beyond the convent walls.

A useful way to think about the place of Hongakuin no miya's album in the wide production of *Genji* images that arose in the early modern period is as part of an iconic circuit. Coined by art historian Carlo Ginzburg to explain the circulation of erotic and sacred images in different media among various groups of people, the term, as later elaborated by Craig Clunas, offers a way of organizing images centered on a common theme that circulate widely to various audiences with different effect.³⁹⁹ Images become self-referential as they are based on previous images and later texts, and the circulation of images at once widens the audience for like images and circumscribes the network of personal choices of those images culled from a vast array of possibilities. *Genji* iconic circuits included images painted on different amusements, including incense competition equipment or *karuta* カルタ (card games); *Genji* painted albums; images appearing in didactic books for women; The *Genji* on screen paintings; and

³⁹⁸ Haruo Shirane, ed. *Envisioning the Genji: Media, Gender and Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 4.

³⁹⁹ Carlo Ginzburg discusses iconic circuits in his essay on erotic images by Titian and the circulation of images among public and private spheres in sixteenth-century Italy in "Titian, Ovid, and Sixteenth-Century Codes for Erotic Illustration," in *Myths, Emblems and Clues* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1986), 77-95; "iconic circuits" is mentioned on pages 79 and 92. See Craig Clunas' examination of iconic circuits in Ming visual culture in *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 46-48. Laura Allen also mentions iconic circuits vis à vis *Genji* images appearing in didactic texts for women in "Japanese Exemplars for a New Age: *Genji* Paintings from the Seventeenth-Century Tosa School," in *Critical Perspectives on Classicism in Japanese Paintings, 1600-1700*, ed. Elizabeth Lillehoj (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 100.

increasingly toward the end of the Edo period, a proliferation of ukiyo-e and illustrated books. *Genji* images drew from different sources, and by the Edo period, few referred directly back to the original text for inspiration, instead building on more proximate painting precedents and medieval commentaries and digests.⁴⁰⁰ Through iconic circuits created around images of the *Genji*, the codification and circulation of motifs is made clear, as is the audience for whom they resonated. Specifically, the *Genji* circuits of images also informed the visual choices Hongakuin no miya made in creating her album.

While participating in major trends occurring in mid-Edo Kyoto with the explosion of cultural knowledge in the *Genji*, the Hōkyōji album is also intensely personal, representing Hongakuin no miya's social position and knowledge of *The Tale of Genji*. There may be partly practical reasons for the way the abbess created the handmade *Genji* album. Elaborate lacquer incense box sets, which held all the incense accoutrements including *Genji* incense manuals, were part of trousseaux for elite brides in the Edo period.⁴⁰¹ (Fig. 4.2) Without the need for a trousseau and with limited financial resources, Hongakuin no miya may have undertaken the fashioning of her own incense album. Unusual formats chosen for *Genji* incense manuals at Hōkyōji and another imperial Buddhist convent support the view that, free from the conventional form of the incense manual included in lacquer sets, nuns were able to create their own versions as they wished. It should be noted, however, that lacquer incense sets do appear in at least one convent collection, Reikanji's. (Fig. 4.3)

From manifestation of artistic expression to personal interest in a kind of court amusement, from individual statement of class and status to the efflorescence of popular

⁴⁰⁰ Haruo Shirane, "The Tale of Genji and the Dynamics of Cultural Production," in *Envisioning the Genji*, 34-35.

⁴⁰¹ One famous example of a trousseau that includes incense accoutrements is the Hatsune no chōdo, created in gold makie lacquer for Chiyōhime, the eldest daughter of the third shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu, for her marriage to Tokugawa Ie of the Nagoya branch of the Tokugawa family. Completed in 1639, the trousseau consists of forty-seven items daily use items considered necessary for the new bride, including writing boxes, cosmetic stands, furniture, and incense, decorated with motifs from the *The Tale of Genji*. See Karinsha, ed., *Ōchō no asobi: Inishie no miyabi na sekai* [Court amusements: the world of Heian period elegance] (Kyoto: Shiksha, 1992), 60, 69; NHK Bijutsukan, ed., *Oku dōgu no hana: Genji monogatari emaki to hatsune no chōdo* [Flowers of items for personal use: *The Tale of Genji* handscroll and the "Hatsune"-decorated trousseau] (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1988), 65; 78-81; and Haino Akio, "Hatsune no chōdo" [The Hatsune trousseau], *Nihon no bijutsu* 6, no. 277 (June, 1989): 19-32.

culture, the *Genji* incense album at Hōkyōji, through its form and decoration, offers different perspectives on the function of an object created by an elite woman in the eighteenth century. By examining the multiple layers of significance engendered by the object, its place and its maker's involvement in the cultural landscape of eighteenth-century Kyoto will become clearer.

Physical Attributes of the *Genji* Incense Album

The *Genji* incense album in the collection of Hōkyōji is a double-sided folding album, decorated with motifs from chapters of *The Tale of Genji*, for use in the *Genji* incense game (*genji kō* 源氏香). (Fig. 4.4) Exquisitely crafted and in pristine condition, the album has remained in the convent collection since the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century when it was made by the twenty-second abbess, Hongakuin no miya.⁴⁰²

The pages of the folding album measure 15 x 13 cm and are composed of a piece of undyed silk pasted to a gold leaf background, which breaks the narrative into discretely framed leaves. Attached at the edges to make a fluid fold, the pages form a greatly simplified version of all the chapters of *The Tale of Genji*. Every leaf is decorated with the chapter title, a narrative excerpt or poem, an incense game symbol, and one major motif – a flower, a figure or figures, buildings, or household objects – that refer to the chapter in question. (Fig. 4.5) While some scenes use only a single branch of a seasonal tree as a motif, such as the forty-third chapter, Red Plum Blossoms (*Kōbai* 紅梅), (Fig. 4.6) and the forty-fourth chapter, Bamboo River (*Takekawa* 竹河), (Fig. 4.7) most leaves have more elaborate designs. For example, the forty-seventh chapter, Trefoil Knots (*Agemaki* 総角), is illustrated with a scene of river men with bundles of wood on the Uji River beneath a bridge and a willow tree, (Fig. 4.8) while the New Wisteria Leaves (*Fuji no Uraba* 藤裏葉) chapter is illustrated with a well-outfitted and finely detailed palanquin. (Fig. 4.9) Bright mineral pigments are used to accent the album

⁴⁰² See chapter three for a biography of Hongakuin no miya. Except for a small tear on the front cloth cover and a slight buckling of the pages, the album is in excellent physical condition. The well-preserved state of the album is also partly due to the wooden box in which it is kept. While there is no indication of the date of the box or the author of the inscription on it, as the album fits snugly into the box, it can be assumed to be constructed with the express purpose of preserving the album. The inscription is brushed in three vertical lines: *Hongakuin no miya Tokugon Rihō/goe gouta gogenhitsu/genji kō ezū* 本覚院宮徳嚴理豊/御繪御歌御源筆/源氏香繪圖 [Genji incense paintings/Paintings, poems, and text by the hand of Hongakuin no miya Tokugon Rihō]. Hongakuin no miya Tokugon Rihō is the name Rihō took upon retiring from the abbacy, indicating the inscription was written after 1731, when Hongakuin no miya retired.

leaves. Despite the length of time since its creation, the coloration of the entire album remains vivid. All of the motifs are sprinkled with a light, uneven layer of gold dust, giving the impression of soft and gauzy clouds. A few of the scenes incorporate silver leaf to depict the moon, which has blackened with time. An example of the effective use of color can be seen in the illustration for the fifty-first chapter, A Drifting Boat (*Ukifune* 浮舟), in which Niou and Ukifune are depicted on a boat floating on a vividly colored river. (Fig. 4.10) The soft edges of the water and the touch of green in the bush in front of white, snowy banks capture at once the chilled atmosphere of winter (and by extension the doomed nature of their relationship) and the small thaw of Niou's passion, suggested by the bright blue of the water. For each of the chapters, a title and poem brushed in cursive text dance around the images, interplaying with motifs and further identifying the chapter. Delicate details and fine, steady lines are balanced by a strikingly bold symbol used in the *Genji* incense game, called a *Genji mon* (源氏紋, lit. *Genji crest*). (Fig. 4.11)

While there is little doubt that Hongakuin no miya painted the album and that it is a work of fine craftsmanship, other questions arise in connection to it. The format is unusual for a *Genji* incense manual, as its large size makes it unwieldy for actual use during an incense contest. Typical incense manuals were small enough to fit in the palm of one's hand, and had limited decoration. The important attributes of an incense manual were its compact size and the prominent display of *Genji mon* to indicate each chapter. (Fig. 4.12) The Hōkyōji album has the inclusion of an excerpt from each corresponding chapter and elaborate scene depictions. While these inclusions are possible given the larger size, they were not common among incense manuals.⁴⁰³ The paintings are finely produced and detailed, inviting the viewer to peruse each page at close range. In this respect and in its physical attributes it resembles painted folding albums with *Genji* themes popular in elite circles at this time, which will be discussed below. Yet, the distinctive composition of the pages and the inclusion of the incense symbol clearly mark it as an example of an incense manual.

Hongakuin no miya's incense album was created in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, a time when the aristocracy was politically and financially weakened but

⁴⁰³ A square (*shikishi*) *Genji* incense manual from the early to mid Edo period remains in the private collection of Nakano Kōichi in Yokohama. Like Hōkyōji's album, the Nakano album is of accordian-fold construction. *Genji mon* are prominent on each leaf, and four leaves are visible at a time when the album is opened. Each leaf consists of single or reduced motif in mineral pigment, chapter title and emblem. Unlike Hongakuin no miya's album, Nakano's album does not contain excerpts from the text. Hayashi Kyōko, *Katachi no naka no genji monotari [The Tale of Genji in art forms]* (Tokyo: Yudachisha, 2003), 150-151.

still culturally relevant among the social elite of Kyoto.⁴⁰⁴ *The Tale of Genji* became a conscious reminder of the glory of the Heian period, co-opted by members at all levels of society as a sign of cultural prowess and knowledge.⁴⁰⁵ While Hongakuin no miya's album reflects the wider phenomena of interest and reimagining *The Tale of Genji* happening among the Kyoto elite during the eighteenth century, it also offers a personal view of the abbess' understanding of the *Genji* and its relevance to the aristocracy.

Imperial nuns were active participants of court culture through games and competitions created in the Edo period that recalled traditional court culture. In format, content, and materials, the incense album by Hongakuin no miya followed current popular trends to revisit and continue the courtly past. Analysis of the album through these different perspectives will show how Hongakuin no miya negotiated her position in society as a practitioner of contemporary cultural trends and a representative of imperial authority.

The Aristocratic Community: The *Genji* Incense Album as Display Object

The large size of the incense album and the great attention to detail and composition invite the viewer to dwell on the images on the pages. The album format necessitates only one or a few viewers at a time, creating an intimate setting for reception. In this respect it is not unlike a *Genji* painted album, such as those popularized during the Muromachi period.⁴⁰⁶ *Genji* handscrolls and albums were painted mainly for the aristocracy, either in polychrome and monochrome ink, and in examples from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we see both similarities and variances with Hongakuin no miya's album.

Two examples of *Tale of Genji* polychrome albums that are representative of the genre and are both by members of the Tosa atelier are held today in the collections of the Kyoto National Museum and the Uji *Genji Monogatari* Museum. As official painters to the imperial family, Tosa painters became known for their depictions of *The Tale of Genji*, standardizing motifs and scenes used in each chapter and conventionalizing visual cues used by subsequent non-Tosa painters in the Edo period.⁴⁰⁷ The Kyoto National Museum album was painted by

⁴⁰⁴ See Lee, *Emperor and Aristocracy in Japan, 1467-1680*, 248-286.

⁴⁰⁵ For an excellent introduction to the cultural production of *The Tale of Genji* in Edo period in English, see Shirane, ed., *Envisioning the Tale of Genji*.

⁴⁰⁶ A more common format for *Genji* pictures was the handscroll, evident as early as the twelfth century with the *Genji Monogatari emaki* 源氏物語絵巻, now divided mainly between the Gotoh museum, Tokyo, and the Tokugawa Art Museum, Nagoya.

⁴⁰⁷ Melissa McCormick has written on the contributions of Tosa artists to the canonization of the visualization of *Genji* images. See "Monochromatic *Genji*: The *Hakubyō* Tradition and

members of the Tosa School in the sixteenth century.⁴⁰⁸ An accordion-fold book, the album presents a page of text opposite an illustrated scene on each leaf, each measuring approximately 23 cm x 26 cm. Originally bound in two albums of twenty-seven chapters, it is now bound in four albums.⁴⁰⁹ The calligraphy, written by Emperor Go-yōzei and other courtiers, is brushed on lavishly decorated patterned paper, while the paintings of mineral pigments illustrate scenes from the corresponding chapters. A later album attributed to Tosa Mitsunori (1583–1638), but possibly created by a later generation Tosa painter from the early seventeenth century, in the Uji Genji Monogatari Museum, dates slightly earlier than Hongakuin no miya's album.⁴¹⁰ (Fig. 4.13) Some motival similarities remain among the three albums, but overall, the Tosa albums depict many figures in a literal representation of the narrative, while Hongakuin no miya creates evocative reminders of the chapters through text and image.

The Mitsunori-attributed album measures 16.9 x 15.0 cm., roughly two centimeters larger than Hongakuin no miya's. Bordered by a gold leaf background and painted on paper

Female Commentarial Culture” in *Envisioning the Tale of Genji*, 101-128, especially pages 102-106; “Genji Goes West: The 1510 “Genji Album” and the Visualization of Court and Capital,” *The Art Bulletin* 85, no. 1 (March, 2003): 54-85, especially pages 71-76; “Tosa Mitsunobu's Ko-e: Forms and Functions of Small-format Handscrolls in the Muromachi Period (1333-1573)” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2000); and *Tosa Mitsunobu and the Small Scroll in Medieval Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).

⁴⁰⁸ Originally attributed to Tosa Mitsuyoshi (1539-1613), it is now believed Mitsuyoshi painted the first thirty-five chapters and another Tosa painter, who is unidentified, painted the remaining chapters. See Kano Hiroyuki, “Kyōhakubon *Genji monogatari* gajō no gaka ni tsuite” [Artists of the *Tale of Genji* album in Kyoto National Museum], in *Genji monogatari gajō: Kyōto kokuritsu hakubutsukan shozō*, ed. Kyōto Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan (Tōkyō: Benseisha, 1997), 113-118; and Akiyama Terukazu, ed., “Edo shoki Genji e no shosō” [Various aspects of *Genji* pictures in the early Edo period], *Nihon no bijutsu* 119 (April, 1976): 62-66.

⁴⁰⁹ The four albums contain fourteen or thirteen chapters each. Kano, “Kyōhakubon *Genji monogatari* gajō no gaka ni tsuite,” 113.

⁴¹⁰ Stylistic conventions apparent in motifs suggest that the Uji Genji Monogatari Museum album was created after Mitsunori's time. See Uji Genji Monogatari Myūjiamu, ed. *Genji ekagamicho, Den Tosa Mitsunori fude: Uji-shi Genji Monogatari Myūjiamu shozō* [An illustrated *Genji* album attributed to Tosa Mitsunori in the collection of the Uji Genji Monogatari Museum] (Uji: Genji Monogatari Myūjiamu, 2000).

with flat mineral pigments, it contains no text but has one large scene painted for each chapter for a total of fifty-four images bound in two albums. Gold clouds partially obscure the scenes, but the gold is applied sparingly for an overall matte finish. (Fig. 4.14) The lack of text in Mitsunori's album compels the viewer to be wholly reliant on visual cues to recognize each chapter.⁴¹¹ The brushwork in the Mitsunori album is fine and exact, with little variation in width and with great attention paid to the decorative details on smaller elements, such as kimono, water, and plants. The composition of each page includes motifs of architecture, nature and figures. Indeed, figures appear on every leaf of the album, a point which might be explained by Mitsunori's use of following conventional painting directives, called *ekotoba*, that existed from the late Muromachi period.⁴¹²

***Ekotoba* and the Systemization of Genji Images**

While the extent to which *ekotoba* directives were followed by artists in the execution of *Genji* illustrations is debated in academic scholarship, the similarities between some extant paintings by Tosa artists and scenes in the manuals suggest artists were aware of the *ekotoba* and may have chosen to include representative scenes from them in their own renditions of *Genji* paintings.⁴¹³ *Ekotoba* manuals distilled the long text of *Genji* into short scenes selected from each chapter, which were chosen for their visual qualities in translating *Genji* from text to image.⁴¹⁴ Two hundred and eighty-two possible scenes, which refer to specific points in the

⁴¹¹ While the album was probably remounted later (the cover appears to be modern), it is not clear if there was originally text on facing pages that was removed, which would have been an unusual procedure.

⁴¹² In her study of works of art with *The Tale of Genji* themes from the late Muromachi and Edo periods which she links to *ekotoba* conventions, Shimizu Yoshiko found that all of them represented figures, while downplaying background scenery. Shimizu Yoshiko, "*Genji monogatari kaiga no ichi hōhō: shin shiryō 'Genji monogatari ekotoba' shōkai*" [One technique for *Tale of Genji* paintings: an introduction to a new document, the "*Genji monogatari* painting manual"], *Kokugo kokubun* 29, no. 5 (April, 1966): 6. Miyeko Murase speculates that Mitsunori, given his wide range of scenes in various works that follow directives in the Osaka Women's College's *ekotoba*, might be its author. Murase, *Iconography of The Tale of Genji: Genji monogatari ekotoba* (New York: Weatherhill, 1983), 25.

⁴¹³ Katagiri Yōichi and Iwama Kaoru suggest the manuals were intended for patrons and coordinators of paintings, rather than painters. In McCormick, "Monochromatic Genji," 105.

⁴¹⁴ I borrow Miyeko Murase's translation of the term *ekotoba* as "manual," which is a departure from the conventional translation of a handscroll with pictures that accompany a narrative text.

narrative, are outlined in the *ekotoba*, with directives on how they should be executed. Short passages from the narrative itself follow the direction.⁴¹⁵ The reduction of *The Tale of Genji* narrative into short passages, and the inclusion of directives for the visual depiction of certain scenes, suggest that *ekotoba* directives did not try to capture the entirety of the *Genji* in visual form, but refigured the text into memorable vignettes that embodied the narrative as a whole. The difference is that the *ekotoba* summarized, while staying true to the general arc of the narrative, while pictures of *Genji* negotiated the *monogatari* through the memories or the input of the receiver/reader. The active participation of the viewer is required to complete the narrative arc. In the process of doing so, the text becomes altered as characters gain or lose prominence through their inclusion or omission from the painting.⁴¹⁶ The fact that the *ekotoba* offered representational choices to the maker(s) of a *Genji* album suggests a further mediation between text and image as a patron/coordinator/painter was able to select which iconographical scene to serve as a visual mnemonic aid.

Ekotoba were not the sole source of *Genji* iconography that became codified in the late Muromachi or early Edo period. Tosa artists drew on visual choices based on precedent to represent the text. Images with *The Tale of Genji* themes appeared as early as the twelfth century, most famously with the *Genji monogatari* scrolls now divided mainly between the Tokugawa Art Museum in Nagoya and the Gotoh Museum in Tokyo, and albums of 108 leaves (one for text and image for each chapter of *The Tale of Genji*) appeared as early as the sixteenth

Unlike *ekotoba* that combine text and image, the *ekotoba* under discussion here includes text from *The Tale of Genji* with written descriptions of the scenes, a point which Murase believes proves the manuscripts were used as models for painting *Genji*. Murase, *Iconography of the Tale of Genji*, 20. Interestingly, as Shimizu Yoshiko points out, the scenes directed in the *ekotoba* do not always represent the most important moments in the narrative, indicating an emphasis in the *ekotoba* on visually interesting scenes, rather than strictly those that depict plot advancement. “Genji monogatari kaiga no ichi hōhō,” 6.

⁴¹⁵ Julia Meech-Pekarik, “An Artist’s View,” in *Ukifune: Love in the Tale of Genji*, ed. Andrew Pekarik (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1982), 189-190. See also Murase, *Iconography of the Tale of Genji*, 21.

⁴¹⁶ See Yukio Lippit, “Figure and Factice in the *Genji* Scrolls: Text, Calligraphy, Paper, and Painting,” *Envisioning the Tale of Genji*, 49-80, especially page 56, regarding narrative remapping and reimagination in regard to the *Genji* Scrolls.

century.⁴¹⁷ Compositional conventions date back as early as the twelfth century, although images did not become codified until the Edo period.⁴¹⁸

Artists drew upon painting precedents but also looked to fifteenth and sixteenth century digests and commentaries that proliferated in the medieval period for representational inspiration. Similarities in scenes and generalized painting conventions further relied on the viewer/reader to supply his or her knowledge of the text to identify the given scene.⁴¹⁹ In this way, text and image were intricately and inextricably tied. By the sixteenth century the proliferation of literature and visual examples of the *Genji* provided ample precedent from which artists drew inspiration for creating *Genji* pictures. The choices artists made in representing scenes or excerpts depended on personal preference and the intended audience for the painting.

Visual Differences and Intended Viewers of *Genji* Albums

The recipient(s) and viewers of *Genji* albums and Hongakuin no miya's incense album come into focus through closer examination of the motival choices and modes of representation employed in each. With the provenance of the extant incense album in the Hōkyōji collection

⁴¹⁷ For an introduction to the earliest complete painted album of *The Tale of Genji* discovered in the Harvard University Art Museum in 1997 and the reproduction of the entire album see Chino Kaori, Kamei Wakana, and Ikeda Shinobu, "Hāvādo daigaku bijutsukan zō 'Genji monogatari gajō' o meguru sho mondai" [Issues surrounding the "*Tale of Genji* album" in the collection of the Harvard University Art Museum), *Kokka* 1222 (August, 1997): 11-24. See also Melissa McCormick, "Genji Goes West."

⁴¹⁸ These conventions include the use of depicting figures with only thin brushstrokes to delineate eyes and noses (*hikime kagihana* 引目), apparent on the twelfth-century scroll, which has become a standard artistic convention for representing noble figures in Japanese painting. The truncated features demands the viewer to impart distinguishing features to the figures, such as emotion, expression, and sometimes gender, drawing the viewer into the scene and creating a connection between the viewer and the painted scene. Similarly, the "blown-off roof" (*fukinuki yatai* 吹き抜き屋台) convention which shows interiors from an elevated view with the roof removed is used repeatedly in the *Genji* scrolls. The angular lines created by the walls of partially drawn buildings act as spatial and narrative organizers, effectively joining or dividing elements as the emotional tenor of the scene dictates. See Murase, *Iconography of The Tale of Genji*, 10-12, for a brief introduction to painting elements in the twelfth century *Genji* scrolls that later become conventionalized.

⁴¹⁹ McCormick, "Genji Goes West," 71.

known, it is clear who painted the album and for whom at least one intended viewer (herself) was. I argue that without the mediation of an outside patron or dealer, the artist was able to design the album according to her wishes. While she still may have drawn on conventions seen in previous images of the *Genji*, she was not bound by artistic tradition or professional compromise. Motival and textual choices and the visual shorthand used to represent the text suggest Hongakuin no miya's album was familiar with the narrative of *Genji*. A further assumption can be made that other viewers of the album, such as later nuns at the convent, had similar backgrounds and social circumstances which gave them access to the abbreviated depiction of the narrative.

In contrast to the highly personal nature of the incense album, the *Genji* albums reveal production through a collaborative effort. The calligraphy for the Kyoto National Museum album was brushed by Emperor Go-yōzei and a group of courtiers, implying the viewing audience were high-ranking members of the aristocracy.⁴²⁰ That Mitsuyoshi and Mitsunori painted for a male or male and female audience is suggested by the illustration that represents chapter nine, Heart-to-Heart (*Aoi* 葵). The scene, which depicts the palanquins of Genji's wife and his erstwhile lover, the Rokujō Haven, jockeying for a prominent viewing position along a parade route at the Kamo Festival, has become one of the most recognizable in Edo period paintings of *The Tale of Genji*.⁴²¹ (Fig. 4.15) In the Kyoto National Museum album, the two

⁴²⁰ The fact that Tosa Mitsuyoshi was an official imperial painter also bears this out. The courtiers who contributed text for the Kyoto National Museum *Genji* album include Asukai Masatane 飛鳥井雅胤 (1586-1651), Nishinotōin Tokinao 西洞院時直 (1584-1636), Daikakuji Kūshō 大覚寺空性 (1573-1650), Kūjō no miya Toshihito 八条宮智仁 (1579-1629), Konoe Nobutada's daughter 近衛信尹息女 (dates unknown), Konoe Nobuhiro 近衛信尋 (1599-1649), Konoe Nobutada 近衛信尹 (1565-1614), Takeuchi Ryōjō 竹内良恕 (1573-1643), Karasuma Mitsukata 烏丸光賢 (1600-1638), Myōhōin Tsunetane 妙法院常胤 (1548-1621), Karasuma Mitsuhiro 烏丸光広 (1579-1638), Shōren'in Sonjun 青蓮院尊純 (1591-1653), Ano Saneaki 阿野実顕 (1581-1645), Hino Sukekatsu 日野資勝 (1577-1639), Kikutei Kisen 菊亭季宣 (1594-1652), Nakanoin Michimura 中院通村 (1587-1653), Saionji Saneharu 西園寺実晴 (1600-1673), Kazan'in Sadahiro 花山院定熙 (1558-1634), Reizei Tameyori 冷泉為頼 (1592-1627), Yotsusuji Suetsugu 四辻季継 (1581-1639), Koga Atsumichi 久我敦通 (1565-?), and Koga Michisaki 久我通前 (1591-1634). Tosa Mitsuyoshi and Goyōzei Tennō, et al., *Genji monogatari gajō*, 120.

⁴²¹ A well-known example of the so-called carriage fight (*kuruma-araso* 車争) is a folding screen (first half seventeenth century) by Kano Sanraku 狩野山楽 (1559-1653) in the collection of Tokyo National Museum.

carriages are pulled forward into the center of the composition, while two other carriages of noblewomen and their attendants watch in the background. The bearers of the palanquins come to blows in the center of the scene while two noblemen try to calm them. The brightly colored cloth of billowing robes trailing out from inside the two carriages indicate the high-ranking status and identity of the two occupants.

The *Heart-to-Heart* leaf is the only painting in the entire album that does not include an architectural structure of some kind to organize space, which works to highlight the chaos of the scene.⁴²² One figure in the center grabs the robes of a carriage-bearer, while another bearer brandishes a lacquered stool from which a leg has been broken. Although a pivotal scene in the narrative,⁴²³ the disarray of the usual solemn procession of a parade and the highly animated and agitated figures in court dress provide comic relief in an otherwise decorous set of paintings. In contrast, the leaf of the corresponding chapter in Hongakuin no miya's album does not include the carriage fight at all. Rather, the motif for this chapter is a single white curtain, which shields the "marriage" bed where Genji deflowers Young Murasaki, a later scene in the chapter. (Fig. 4.16) While the curtain in the leaf recalls the birthing curtain behind which the troubled Aoi lies on her deathbed, perhaps an intentional ambiguity, the excerpt written on the album leaf is a poem by Genji, written after their first night together as lovers:

Ah, what distances kept us so strangely apart, when night after night
We two yet lay side by side in our overlapping clothes."⁴²⁴

Hongakuin no miya chose this motif, one assumes, because of the importance of the relationship between Murasaki and Genji as it develops throughout the narrative. Murasaki remains the most sympathetic female character in the text as the model figure of beauty, virtue, and education, and is Genji's greatest object of affection. The lack of figures in the composition – movement is suggested only by a corner of the screen lifting slightly with a

⁴²² Two other chapters have highly abbreviated devices: The fourteenth chapter includes the entrance gate (*torii*) of a shrine, while the sixteenth chapter shows the end of a gate. These motifs still act as a frame against which the figures are organized.

⁴²³ The shame of the Rokujō Haven being outmaneuvered at the festival results in her tormenting the pregnant Aoi as a possessed spirit, which causes Aoi's death after a difficult childbirth.

⁴²⁴ Tyler, trans., *The Tale of Genji*, 187. *Ayanakumo /hedatekeru kana/ yo o kasane sasugani nareshi yoru no koromo o* あやなくも/隔てけるかな/夜を重ねさすがになれし夜の衣を.

gentle breeze – and the abbreviated elements makes the recognition and association with the chapter more intense.

Throughout the incense album at Hōkyōji, the focus of the chapter representations is not the actions of the figures, but the word-image association necessitated by the reduced elements Hongakuin no miya provided. As will be seen later in this chapter, these motifs are gendered through the personal association the album has with its creator. One obvious reason for the variances in motival choices seen in the Hōkyōji album and the Tosa polychrome albums is, of course, because they are different types of albums. The Tosa *Genji* albums produced a visually annotated and abridged version of the whole of *The Tale of Genji* narrative intended for viewing by an individual or small group. The Hōkyōji album was based not on the narrative itself but on the incense game associated on it. Ostensibly, the purpose of each page was not to relay the narrative as much as it was to identify the chapter. One need not remember the story, only the title of the chapter for use in the game. As such, the motival choices are offered in a visual shorthand, whereas the Mitsuyoshi and Mitsunori albums include well-developed depictions of entire scenes from the narrative. The Tosa albums were also painted according to atelier tradition and thus drew from stylistic and technical conventions. As noted in the previous chapter, Hongakuin no miya, who trained with a Kano school artist, was, nonetheless, an amateur painter who drew, we may surmise, from other, personal inspirations.

Given the size of the incense album and the detail with which Hongakuin no miya chose and executed the motifs and text, however, it is likely that she painted the album with the intent of display or appreciation in addition to its use in the incense competition. Whether or not the album was intended for actual use in the incense competition, the inclusion of *Genji* incense symbols on each leaf entertains the possibility of its function as an incense game manual. The incense album used in competition and, later, *Genji* incense symbols become important visual markers of *The Tale of Genji* in the Edo period. Examination of the album in this light sheds further information about its use and cultural relevance.

The *Genji* Incense Album as Game Equipment

Painted incense manuals became common around the early eighteenth century in direct relation to the increased interest in this form of the *Genji* incense competition.⁴²⁵ Most manuals dating back to the Edo period were included as standard equipment in elaborately decorated betrothal sets (*konrei chōdo* 婚礼調度) made by the families of aristocratic and

⁴²⁵ The *Genji* incense competition is said to have been created in the mid-seventeenth century, one of many different forms of incense competition which arose at that time in cultural salons. Private conversation with Hata Masataka, director of Shōeidō Incense, Kyoto, April 4, 2005.

military elite women, and as such were smaller than Hongakuin no Miya's.⁴²⁶ (Fig. 4.17) The leader of an incense gathering would also keep one by his or her side, to pass around to practitioners for purposes of reference for each chapter during the game. While all manuals include a *Genji* symbol and the chapter heading, visual decoration for *Genji* incense manuals vary greatly: some have only the title and symbol against a plain background, while others include small motifs. (Fig. 4.18) In addition, there are examples of unusual “manuals,” like Hongakuin no Miya's, which mix different media and offer complicated visualizations of *The Tale of Genji* narrative.

One such object is a set of interlocking paper and cloth boxes decorated with motifs taken from *The Tale of Genji* and each bearing a *Genji* incense symbol in the collection of Daishōji Imperial Convent. (Fig. 4.19) Dating about fifty years earlier than Hongakuin no miya's album, the Daishōji incense box set is notable for two reasons: its unusual format of forty-five variously shaped boxes designed to hold incense that are, in essence, a puzzle, fitting into a larger, rectangular box, and its attribution to Tōfukumon'in, chief consort of Emperor Go-mizunoo, as its maker.⁴²⁷

Like the Hōkyōji album, the Daishōji incense boxes are a unique example of art made by women associated with the imperial family and with *monzeki* convents that remain today as temple treasures. No other incense box sets of this kind are known at this time, although that does not mean they were not constructed. The delicate materials of cloth and paper used to construct the boxes and the detailed decorations suggest it was crafted by a person or people with hours of leisure and needlework skills. Furthermore, the many hours of labor needed to plan and complete this project required a high degree of motivation from one interested in *Genji* and the incense game.

Both the Hōkyōji and the Daishōji objects have unusual formats—in the case of Hōkyōji's album, its large size and in the case of Daishōji's boxes, the material and puzzle

⁴²⁶ Daimyo sets had a standard list of furnishings and accoutrements (*dōgu* 道具) in the late Muromachi and Edo periods, including equipment for tea, incense, makeup and writing. See Haino Akio, “Kinsei daimyō konrei dōgu” [Trousseau furnishings and accoutrements of early modern daimyo] for a detailed description of the items in trousseaux. In *Nihon no bijutsu* 6, no 277 (June, 1989): 33-74. I am grateful to Hata Masataka for his explanation of the individual parts of the *jisshu kōbako* 十種香箱, the incense box included as a betrothal gift.

⁴²⁷ For further discussion of the cloth and paper incense boxes from Daishōji, see Sharon Yamamoto, “Fabricating Images of the Past: A Set of Incense Boxes in the Daishōji Imperial Convent Collection” (Master's Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2001). See also Graybill, *Days of Discipline and Grace*, 25.

construction—which complicated their actual use in incense competitions. As such they are rather intensely personal reflections of the incense game concept, evident in the visual choices used to decorate each chapter, choices which aptly serve to trigger recognition of the chapter, but which are not based on a set iconography per se. The *Genji* is, rather, distilled into a visual language comprised of multiple motifs that work independently to recall the text.

A comparison of motifs representing Chapter Seventeen, “The Picture Contest” (*Eawase* 絵合), bears out this idea. The chapter focuses on a competition comparing paintings between two teams representing Emperor Reizei’s consorts, the former Ise priestess (Right side) and Kokiden (Left side), themselves supported in the contest by Genji and the Acting Counselor (*Gon no chūnagon*), Tō no Chūjo, respectively. In the original text, the room where the contest is held is described in detail:

The day was set, and with the arrangements prettily but still lightly made, impromptu as they were, the paintings of Left and Right were presented to His Majesty.⁴²⁸ His seat was prepared in the gentlewomen’s sitting room, with the two sides before him to the north and the south. The privy gentlemen sat on the Kōrōden veranda, each one across from the gentlewoman he favored. On the Left, the scrolls’ rosewood boxes, covered by grape-colored Chinese silk, rested on sappanwood stands placed on purple Chinese brocade. Six page girls wore cherry blossom dress gowns over red, and wisteria layerings over scarlet. They looked marvelous and seemed beautifully trained. The Right’s scrolls, in aloeswood boxes, rested on stands of fragrant wood set out on green Koma brocade; the design of the stands as well as the cords with which the brocade was secured to their legs was wonderfully stylish. The page girls were in dress gowns of willow and of kerria rose over green. They all went to place their stands and boxes before His Majesty. His Majesty’s gentlewomen were divided into two sets, front and rear, each dressed accordingly.⁴²⁹

An explanation in the ekotoba manual of the scene from this chapter is explicit in its direction as to where the characters should sit and what details should be incorporated in the scene:

⁴²⁸ His Majesty refers to Emperor Reizei.

⁴²⁹ Tyler, trans., *The Tale of Genji*, 328.

It is after the twentieth of the Third Month. The picture contest is held in the presence of the Reizei emperor. On the left is the Akikonomu faction, led by three ladies: Heinaishinosuke, Jijū no Naishi, and Shōshō no Myōbu. Both Akikonomu and Kokiden should be behind the curtains. In front are Genji, Gon no Chūnagon, and Prince Hotaru.

The paintings of the left group are in boxes of red sandalwood set on sappanwood stands with flaring legs. Purple Chinese brocades are spread under the stands, which are covered with delicate lavender Chinese embroidery. Six little girls are wearing red robes and white jackets lined with red, from under which red and lavender peep out.

As for the right side, the boxes are made of heavy aloes, and the stands of lighter aloes. Green Korean brocades cover the stands; the streamers and flaring legs are all in the latest style. The little girls are wearing green robes and, over them, white jackets with green linings, and their singlets are grayish green lined with yellow.

There should be many ladies of high rank arranged in front and back of the scene. The Suzaku emperor should be shown at Akikonomu's side. When painting this episode on a fan, one should depict the retired emperor sending paintings to Akikonomu, and Oborozukiyo sending her pictures to both groups.⁴³⁰

A detail of a six-panel folding screen by Kano Fusanobu in the collection of Ishiyama Temple depicts the right side of the scene rather faithfully. (Fig. 4.20) The Kyoto National Museum album also displays this scene on the leaf for this chapter. (Fig. 4.21)

The Daishōji incense box for the chapter, The Picture Contest, however, is flower-shaped. (Fig. 4.22) Two scrolls are depicted against a solid red background: one is rolled and the other is unrolled, bearing a scene of flowers. A single line in the narrative refers to the theme of nature: "Those scenes of the four seasons, painted by the old masters so fluently and with so keen an eye, were incomparable, but their scope was limited after all, and it could not convey the full richness of mountains and waters."⁴³¹ While it is unclear if the image of the scrolls refers to this line, it is evident that the single motif responds to the original narrative, rather than the directives in the *ekotoba*, which describe the paintings stacked on stands, their surfaces unseen. A similar motif of unrolled scrolls is seen on the Hōkyōji album leaf for the

⁴³⁰ Murase, *Iconography of The Tale of Genji*, 116-117.

⁴³¹ Tyler, trans., *The Tale of Genji*, 328.

same chapter, on which two paintings casually left open are drawn against a plain background. (Fig. 4.23) The scrolls show landscape themes, one in ink and one in color. Although the exact theme is difficult to discern, the album leaf might show the winning paintings of Suma and Akashi contributed by Genji, executed during his exile from the capital. The Suma scrolls represent a significant moment during which Akikonomu's side wins the painting contest. By using that motif on the album leaf, the emotion of the moment is captured and the significance of his exile is conveyed to the viewer of the album.

“Knowing *Genji*”: Dissemination of *Genji* in Visual Form

Incense-based decoration and *Genji*-based decoration came together in the Edo period as cultural markers of knowledge of *The Tale of Genji* and, by extension, participation in a community of social acceptance that included a hazy notion of the elitism associated with past Heian culture. Not only was knowing the *Genji* important on an elementary level, but visual recognition of the *Genji* was also cultivated more deeply by both men and women during the Edo period. This is seen through the continuation of commonly prescribed scenes set forth in *ekotoba* and executed in different visual media, but was also present on a more personal level among women in the mixing of media with *Genji* themes that served to reinforce recognition and memory of the text through visual means. The Hongakuin no Miya incense manual/display album and the Daishōji incense boxes/puzzle are early examples of this combining of *Genji* markers. Later examples include *Genji* motifs and especially *Genji* incense symbols that proliferate on objects not directly used in the incense game.

By the eighteenth century the visual forms of *Genji* helped to make it recognizable to a larger segment of the Japanese populace. Appearance as decoration on different media, most notably *karuta* and woodblock prints, ensured the dissemination of the *Genji* to well-placed commoners for whom leisure entertainment was possible. The extent to which the *Genji* was incorporated into the consciousness of the urban public is seen in the emergence of visual puns and variants of the *Genji* like *mitate-e* (parody pictures), which assumed knowledge of the original for understanding the double entendre of the second image. A comparison of a set of *The Tale of Genji* cards from the mid-Edo period at Hōkyōji and the two sets of *Genji* incense cards at the Kyoto City University Museum underscores the different ways in which *Genji* was “consumed” and understood.

A set of *karuta* decorated with images and excerpts from all fifty-four chapters of *The Tale of Genji* and dating to the mid-Edo period resides in Hōkyōji.⁴³² Measuring about 5 cm x 7 cm each, the small cards are divided into two decks, each with fifty-four cards: one deck contains cards with only text, the other has cards with a painted motif representing a chapter, the chapter title, and a short excerpt of text. (Fig. 4.24) The cards remain in excellent condition. Unlike the assured, talented hand of Hongakuin no miya's album, the set of Genji cards is painted with simplified motifs in flat, matte pigments that sometimes waver beyond outlines. Moreover, the cards lack the range of expression that Hongakuin no miya was able to accomplish with her fifty-four pages; compositions repeat, references to text are more oblique, and text and image do not always balance each other. For example, the "Painting Contest" chapter, like the Hongakuin no Miya album and the Daishōji incense boxes, represents unrolled scrolls. (Fig. 4.25) The card also includes one rolled scroll. Unlike the other objects, however, the scrolls on the card do not include paintings; one scroll appears to have calligraphy, while the other is blank. They are placed just under the accompanying text, leaving blank space below. A more balanced composition would have scrolls lower on the card to offset the bolder chapter title written above. While the smaller size of the cards may reflect some of the painting choices, size alone does not account for the lack of detail and mastery of the painter.

Although the *karuta* do not reach the same quality as Hongakuin no miya's album, they are still fine examples of a distilled version of *The Tale of Genji*. Some chapters are easily recognizable from just the image on the card. The "Young Murasaki" card, for example, depicts an open birdcage from which a sparrow escapes. (Fig. 4.26) The Green Branch chapter shows a rustic shrine gate among overgrown grasses, a reference to Nonomiya Shrine, which plays a prominent role in the narrative. (Fig. 4.27) Chapters are also easily recognizable from the chapter titles and excerpts that accompany the images. This multiple "identification" of the chapter is helpful for recognizing some chapters that have similar motifs and/or compositions. For example, the chapter, Heart-to-Heart, depicts a solitary palanquin partially hidden behind a rock, an easily recognized motif from the carriage "fight" between Lady Rokujō and Lady Aoi as they jockey for position to see Genji pass in a royal procession. (Fig. 4.28) The chapter, The Royal Progress, however, has a very similar composition. (Fig. 4.29) Small details differentiate the two and give further hints as to chapters: On the Heart-to-Heart card the palanquin is placed before a small stream which is bordered by heartvine, or *aoi*,

⁴³² While the exact date of origin is unclear, the cards are kept (along with a set of flower matching *karuta*) in a larger box decorated with Emperor Kōkaku's crest, indicating that the original recipient may have been Kōkaku's daughter, Rikin.

the original title of the chapter, and on The Royal Progress card, a white cloth hangs from the palanquin, which is set before mountains.

The Tale of Genji cards in Hōkyōji share abbreviated motifs and text with the Hongakuin no miya album, but there is little indication that one artist borrowed from the other. Motifs on the cards are derived partly from chapter titles: of the fifty-four chapters, twenty-three have motifs that relate directly to the titles, rather than the content of the narrative as opposed to six chapters from the album. For example, the *Plum Tree Branch* (*Umegae* 梅枝) card shows a branch of plum, its literal translation, (Fig. 4.30) while the album leaf depicts an incense container, a reference to the incense competition which makes up the subject matter of the chapter. (Fig. 4.31) This reliance on literal depictions suggests the artist was either less familiar with the storyline, or was more interested in making easy references for the players to quickly find the correct card. The relative lack of literal translations may, in turn, reflect Hongakuin no miya's knowledge of the narrative and her visual translation of it; in other words, the abbess may have tried to portray the essence of the narrative, rather than a superficial reading of the chapters. The different motival choices also reflect the nature of the incense competition, which, unlike *karuta*, does not depend on the speed of the players to recognize certain chapters, and indeed, invites the players to linger over their chapter choices.

In general, the motival choices on the cards reflect the tendency to gloss over the narrative in favor of quick reference. Certainly this is partly due to the small size of the cards, but also reflects the nature of the game. The game was most likely played with all the cards from the painted deck (*torifuda* 取札) spread face up on a flat surface. The excerpt was read from a card taken from the text-only deck (*yomifuda* 読札) and the players would try to find the corresponding painted chapter. The visual clues and chapter title/excerpt text helped the player know to which chapter each card referred, but the player still had to be familiar enough with the narrative to recognize from which chapter the text came. As with the naming of the scents in incense, the reading of text evoked knowledge (and memory) of the narrative, broadening the scope of the play beyond the cards before the players to include the cultural, social, and erudite significance of knowing *The Tale of Genji*.

The *Genji* Incense Game

To better understand the decoration on *Genji*-themed incense equipment, it is useful at this point to outline the history of the incense game for which it was produced. The *Genji* incense game (*Genji kō* 源氏香) was played among the aristocracy during the early Edo period. Go-mizunoo and Tōfukumon'in enjoyed competitions based on identifying sequences of incense scents (*kumikō* 組香), and variants of incense competitions played on board games

were especially popular at gatherings held in their palaces.⁴³³ Prior to the development of the *Genji*-themed game, incense appreciation became ritualized as an elaborate elite-centered activity during the medieval era. During the Muromachi period (1392-1593), when military households (*buke*) firmly held the reins of power, the enjoyment of incense was stylized into a formal pastime among the cultured elite on a par with other elite activities such as tea (*chanoyu* 茶の湯) and linked verse (*renga* 連歌).⁴³⁴ Two major “schools” (*ryū* 流) of incense that developed in the Muromachi period were the Shino *ryū* 志野流, started by Shino Sōshin 志野宗信 (1442 or 1445-1523) and the Oie *ryū* 御家流, founded by Sanjōnishi Sanetaka 三条西実隆 (1455-1537). The incense game which evolved in the Muromachi period and became known as *kōdō* 香道 by the Edo period was centered on identifying individual characteristics of fragrances from rare woods; *Genji kō* was one variant of this type of incense game, and numerous versions of *Genji kō* developed in the early Edo period.

The most common incense game during the Edo period was the five-line *Genji kō* competition, in which five slivers of five different types of incense were wrapped in tiny envelopes for a total of twenty-five envelopes. These papers were then shuffled together. Five envelopes were chosen at random and burned one at a time. The pool of twenty-five envelopes yielded a total of fifty-two possible combinations of incense sequences; the order of repeated or different scents was associated with the fifty-four chapters of *The Tale of Genji*, minus the first chapter, The Paulownia Pavilion (*Kiritsubo* 桐壺), and the last, The Floating Bridge of Dreams (*Yume no Ukihashi* 夢浮橋). The purpose of the game was to identify each type of incense as it was burned and then recall to which chapter the combination of scents referred.⁴³⁵ The five lines of burning incense were visually represented in incense *mon*, the five-line symbol with varying connected lines, which corresponded to each chapter. (Fig. 4.32) For example, if the five scents were different (in other words, if one of each type of incense was burned), they corresponded to the second chapter, The Broom Tree (*Hahakigi* 帚木), which was represented in a *Genji mon* by five unconnected lines. Chapter Sixteen, At the Pass (*Sekiya* 関屋), was

⁴³³ Ozaki Saeko, *Kōdō ran no sono* [Incense ceremony orchid garden] (Kyoto: Tankosha, 2002), 444.

⁴³⁴ Hata Masataka, “Kō no rekishi” [The history of incense], in *Ōchō no asobi*, 172. For connections between incense and other Muromachi-originated entertainment, such as literature, tea, and *waka* poetry, see Morozumi Kahoru, “Kaori to miyabi no sekai: koten bungaku, waka, kōdō, chadō no bijutsu” [Scent and the world of elegance: the art of classical literature, waka poetry, the incense ceremony, and the tea ceremony], *Chadō zasshi* 68, no. 5 (May, 2004): 42-46.

⁴³⁵ Karinsha, ed., *Ōchō no asobi*, 76.

recognized if there were three scents: the first was distinct, the second, third, and fourth were the same, and the fifth scent was different from the previous four. The symbol represents this order through the connection of the second, third and fourth lines. The first and fifth lines stood independently.

Other variants of the game of combining incense scents, along with symbols of connected or unconnected lines can be seen in the Edo period. Before the use of five slivers of incense for the *Genji* incense game, there was *keizukō* 系図香, which used three or four groupings of incense. *Keizu* refers to the resemblance of the lines to those used in genealogical charts. From three groupings only five combinations are possible and from four groupings there are fifteen possibilities, so practitioners of this game responded not with text-related answers, but with the corresponding symbols.⁴³⁶ Another variant of *kumikō* games includes six groupings with a total of 213 possible combinations. Competitions could involve as many as ten groupings.⁴³⁷ The use of connected-line symbols to identify identical scents in these games indicates a precedence for the use of symbols in the *Genji* incense competition.

***Genji* Incense Symbols as Signs of Erudition**

The presence of the *Genji mon*, a distinct, bold-patterned symbol composed of five interconnected lines, on visual media related to the *Genji* complicates the meaning of *Genji*-decorated objects. The addition of symbols on the Daishōji and Hōkyōji incense objects suggests, if not a practical connection to the competition, a sympathetic or aesthetic relationship to the game. What was the interest of incense to the imperial nuns who created and enjoyed these objects? One clue is found in the literary connection to *The Tale of Genji*, which was already canonized by the seventeenth century, and to the court culture described in the narrative for which it became a romantic symbol.

As *The Tale of Genji* became representative of a vague cultural past which culturati could lay claim to through the plethora of textual and visual material produced about it during the Edo period, so, too, did the *Genji* incense symbols offer quick access to erudition through their appearance on a variety of objects. A significant distinction to be made about the *Genji* symbols, however, is that knowledge of the individual symbols – which symbol corresponded to which chapter – or their origin as part of the incense game was not as important as recognizing them as being associated with the narrative of *The Tale of Genji*. Their

⁴³⁶ Kōdō Bunka Kenkyūkai, ed., *Kō to Kōdō* [Incense and the incense ceremony] (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1989), 60.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

transformation into rudimentary symbols of the narrative can be seen through their appearance on games and images not related to incense and in teaching materials for women.

A set of *karuta*, consisting of two decks of fifty-four cards, in the collection of the Kyoto City University of Arts, combines poetry, symbols, and imagery in its reconfiguration of *The Tale of Genji* narrative. (Fig. 4.33) The cards measure approximately 5 cm x 7 cm and are woodblock-printed paper pasted on cardboard backing. Light washes of color are applied over sections of the cards in a haphazard fashion. One deck, consisting of cards called *yomifuda*, has the beginning of the identifying poem that gives the chapter its name and a motif to visually stimulate the player's imagination. (Fig. 4.34) The other deck, with *torifuda* cards, contains the second half of the poem and a large incense symbol. (Fig. 4.35) The *Genji* sign in this case acts as referent for the chapter title, balancing the image on the other deck. It is equally important as the text and imagery in its placement on the card and, by extension, its symbolism of the narrative. The representative nature – rather than a literal understanding – of the *Genji mon* becomes clearer when it is known that of the fifty-four cards of the *torifuda* deck, only twenty-nine use the correct symbol for the corresponding chapter. The remaining twenty-three cards (the first and last chapters do not have symbols) use them incorrectly. Two *Genji mon* used for the chapters, Suma (*Suma* 須磨) (Fig. 4.36) and The Imperial Progress (*Miyuki* 御幸), (Fig. 4.37) do not exist in the incense game, but are reverse images of The Law (*Minori* 御法) (Fig. 4.38) and Evening Mist (*Yūgiri* 夕霧) chapters, (Fig. 4.39) respectively. Furthermore, certain symbols are used more than once. In all, only thirty-three of the fifty-two symbols are represented on the cards, indicating the usage of the wrong symbol was a conscious decision rather than a lack of knowledge about which *mon* to use.⁴³⁸

The Kyoto City University of Arts *karuta* rely heavily on the poems for proper recognition of the matching cards, and to a lesser extent, employ leitmotifs popular at the time. For example, the card for the Safflower (*Suetsumuhana* 末摘花) chapter shows a scene of a courtier leaning to pick a flower in the garden. (Fig. 4.40) His outer robe (and the veranda behind him) is washed with light yellow, and his pleated pants (*hakama*) are painted a dark blue. While the card does not show a woman playing a koto, a common representation of this chapter, it does include the veranda on which Genji hears her play and the flower itself, which lends the chapter its title. Indeed, the poem on the *yomifuda* and *torifuda* is the one that gave the chapter its title:

⁴³⁸ For example, the symbol for the chapter, The Seer (*Maboroshi* 幻), is used seven times between the thirty-second and the fifty-third chapters. There is no clear indication for the prevalence of this symbol, except that it is visually one of the more eye-catching designs.

*Natsukashiki iro tomo nashi ni nateshikono
suetsumuhana o sode ni fureken*

This is not at all a color to which I warm, what then did I mean
by letting myself brush sleeves with a safflower in full blush?⁴³⁹

The symbol for this card, however, is incorrect, and indicates the Thoroughwort Flowers (*Fujibakama* 藤袴) chapter. Another example is the chapter Beneath the Autumn Leaves (*Momijinoga* 紅葉賀), which employs the symbol for the chapter, Red Plum Blossoms (*Kōbai* 紅梅). (Fig. 4.41) The top half of the card is written with the beginning line of a poem from the chapter:

Mono omofu ni tachimafu e kumo aranumi no

My unhappiness made of me hardly the man to stand up and dance.⁴⁴⁰

The bottom half of the card shows two courtiers performing a dance, framed by the festive edge of a tent in the left corner and branches of a Japanese maple tree in the middle right register. The robes of the courtiers bear traces of yellow over orange trains, and pale green covers the “ground” on which they dance (while also covering the tent in the foreground). The outline of a cloud forms a blank space in the upper register for the second stanza of the poem:

Sode uchifurishi kokoro shirikya

⁴³⁹ なつかしきいろともなしになてしこの 末摘花を袖にふれけん. Transcription by Hirota Takashi, “Hongaku shūzōhin ‘Genji kōzushiki iri uta karuta’ ni tsuite” [Poem karuta with Genji incense diagrams in the collection of this university], *Kyōto Shiritsu Geijutsu Daigaku Bijutsu gakubu kenkyū kiyo* (*Kyōto Shiritsu Geijutsu Daigaku Bijutsu Gakubu*) 28 (1983): 47. English translation by Tyler, *The Tale of Genji*, 127. The poem refers to Genji’s displeasure at seeing a gift from a lover to whom he had just a passing attraction. The clumsiness of the gift, a purple robe and lining of the same color, reminds him of the sender and of his cooled feelings for her.

⁴⁴⁰ ものおもふに立まふへくもあらぬみの. Japanese transcription by Hirota, “Genji kōzushiki iri uta karuta,” 47. English translation by Tyler, *The Tale of Genji*, 136.

Did you divine what I meant when I waved those sleeves of mine?⁴⁴¹

Aside from the poem, the visual cues offered in the image of the courtiers dancing, the tent ridge, and the fall foliage (*momiji*) help to identify the chapter sufficiently, and it can be assumed that the viewer did not need to know the correct symbol for this chapter. Indeed, knowing the correct symbol would cause greater confusion in identifying the chapter correctly. The *presence* of the symbol was more important than the correct reading/meaning of it. In this way, *Genji* symbols extended beyond their initial purpose for use in the *Genji* incense game to become another visual marker of *Genji* knowledge. Rather than being a simple translation of chapter titles, the *Genji mon* became conflated with the aristocratic background from which the tale arose, representing court culture and to a lesser degree, the obscured traces of the original incense game.

The appropriation of *Genji* symbols for knowledge of the *Genji* text is evident in later ukiyo-e prints with a *Genji* incense theme, which have *Genji mon* for the first and last chapters, The Paulownia Pavilion and The Floating Bridge of Dreams. Because the incense game only has fifty-two possible combinations, these two chapters originally did not have incense *mon*, but *Genji* incense prints from the early nineteenth century include spurious five-line combinations. A print of The Paulownia Pavilion by Utagawa Kunisada 歌川国貞 I (Toyokuni 豊国 III; 1786–1864) in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston includes the symbol originally meant to represent the tenth chapter, The Green Branch (Sakaki 榊), with the first and the second lines connected at the top and the last three lines connected, indicating the first and second scents are the same and the last three scents are the same. (Fig. 4.42) The *Genji mon* for the final chapter connects the lines at the top and the bottom, which is meaningless in the context of the incense competition, but which makes for an interesting design. (Fig. 4.43) The disregard for the matching of proper symbol with chapter and the creation of pretend *mon* indicates how the designs became less associated with the game of incense and more a cultural marker of imagined court culture and the *Genji* in the late Edo period.

Another possible function of Hongakuin no Miya's album becomes apparent in conjunction with later Edo period objects that use the *Genji* incense *mon* as a symbol of cultural elitism. While the symbols' use as cultural marker was not codified when Hongakuin

⁴⁴¹ 袖うちふりし心しりきや. Hirota, "Genji kōzushiki iri uta karuta," 47. English translation by Tyler, *The Tale of Genji*, 136. The poem is a plaintive declaration of desire for the Empress, Fujitsubo, who is his father's principal consort. Genji and Fujitsubo had once had an affair, but since they could never be together again, Genji used his dance to express his feelings for her. The following morning he wrote this poem.

no Miya painted her album or when the maker(s) of the Daishōji incense boxes crafted them, their multiple functions as incense/display/play objects presages their popular usage. The distinctively bold geometric designs of the symbols lend themselves to such a quick visual patterning. While it is certain that the album or incense boxes were not seen by many people outside of the convents, it can be assumed that they were seen by members of court and other elite women in social circles in which nuns moved. The use of the album in the *Genji* incense game must also be assumed; indeed, the presence of it in the convent places it within the community of incense practitioners and *Genji* enthusiasts. Hongakuin no miya is placed within the community of educated women, as incense *mon* increasingly became symbols of social etiquette during the Edo period.

To reiterate, the unusual physical qualities of the Daishōji incense boxes and the Hōkyōji album suggest they might not have been made strictly for use in incense competitions. While the incense game was practiced during the Edo period, incense had other cultural significance, connecting the practitioner to a courtly past and a contemporary social elite. The association with the narrative, *The Tale of Genji*, filtered through the pastime of incense, personalized the text for incense practitioners through the field of play. Games, and, importantly, two-dimensional decoration on games, helped contribute to a growing fascination and need to internalize the narrative among all social groups in Edo period Japan. This cultural significance is reinforced by the presence of other *Genji*-based objects in Hōkyōji and other imperial Buddhist convents.

Social Etiquette: the *Genji* and *Genji mon* as Didactic Material

The inclusion of text from *The Tale of Genji* in Hongakuin no miya's incense album reflects the high level of education she attained as a Buddhist abbess and a member of the imperial family. The choices she made in excerpts and motifs for her album suggest she had read *The Genji* in its entirety. Her familiarity with the narrative is further indicated by the presence of a section of *The Tale of Genji*, copied by Imperial Prince Arisugawa no miya Yūkihito (1656-1699) and addressed to Hongakuin no miya Rihō, which remains in the Hōkyōji collection.⁴⁴² In addition to being evidence that shows interaction among male and female siblings of the imperial family, its storage at the convent also reveals shared literary

⁴⁴² Komine Kazuaki, "Amadera no chōsa to *Genji monogatari*," 60. Arisugawa no miya Yūkihito shinnō 有栖川宮幸仁親王 was the second son of Emperor Go-sai and Seikanji Tomoko 清閑寺共子, the daughter of Provisional Great Counselor Seikanji Tomotsuna 權大納言清閑寺共綱. He was Rihō's full brother and the third head of the Arisugawa princely family.

interests and the act of copying and circulating texts. Furthermore, the continued preservation of this text at Hōkyōji illustrates the importance placed on objects of literary significance and/or the people associated with them.

A comparison of the text excerpted for a Tosa album and for Hongakuin no miya's album reveals the depth of the abbess' knowledge of the narrative. The chapter, The Typhoon, (*Nowaki* 野分) heralds the beginning of autumn as it describes a strong storm; in its wake Genji, or his messenger, his son, Yūgiri, visits the palaces of Genji's wards to ascertain their well-being after the storm. The scene depicted in Tosa Mitsuyoshi's Kyoto National Museum album is of young girls from the palace of Akikonomu, the Empress, setting out insect cages in the garden while other attendants watch them. (Fig. 4.44) The corresponding scene in the *ekotoba* describes the setting thusly:

Yūgiri makes his way over the bridge along a gallery to Akikonomu's quarters as Genji's messenger. He can see from the distance that two shutters have been raised at the main hall and many women are there. Some are inside and some others are leaning against the balustrades. They have on robes of lavender and pink and various deeper shades of purple, and yellow-green jackets lined with green, all appropriately autumnal hues. Some little girls are sent down to the garden to lay out insect cages in the damp garden. They pick a wild carnation that has been damaged by the winds and bring it back.⁴⁴³

The Tosa album leaf remains true to this description. As the Empress watches from an interior space and another lady-in-waiting leans over a balustrade, three small figures stand in the garden. Two carry insect cages, and one holds a flower in her hand. The five figures all wear robes in shades of russet, pink, yellow, and green, and the autumn grasses in the courtyard further signify the season.

The *ekotoba* outline, in turn, is a faithful recreation of the setting in the narrative:

Standing to the south of Her Majesty's east wing, he saw that her main house had two shutters raised and the blinds rolled up, and that there were women sitting there in the faint early-morning light. There were a lot of them, young ones, leaning on the railing. The freedom of their behavior left some doubt about how they might be dressed, but their varied colors made them a pretty picture in the half-light. Her Majesty was having her page girls go down into the garden to feed dew to the crickets in their cages. Four

⁴⁴³ Murase, *Iconography of the Tale of Genji*, 164.

or five of them in aster and pink, with light or dark gowns and maidenflower dress gown perfect for the season, were wandering here and there with variously colored cages, picking such charming flowers as pinks and bringing them back to their mistress.⁴⁴⁴

Hongakuin no miya dispenses with a motif that recalls the narrative arc of the chapter, instead choosing to illustrate her album leaf with a fence through which autumn grasses sway in the breeze, an indication of the windstorm from which the chapter takes its title. (Fig. 4.45) The text, written at the top of the composition with a script that echoes the movement of the grasses with liling, dancing characters, reads from the opening lines of the chapter:

*Yoshi aru kuroki akaki no mase o yuimasetsuzu,
Onajiki hana no eda sashi,
Sugata, asayū kiri no hikari mo yo no tsunenarazu*⁴⁴⁵

[The flowers Genji had had planted in Her Majesty's garden flattered the eye this year as never before for] they were of every hue and kind, and they twined about low, handsome fences of barked or unbarked wood looking more perfect than the same ones elsewhere, even to the way dew gleamed on them morning and evening and made them shine like jewels.⁴⁴⁶

The painting in the album follows the literal representation of the autumn flowers bending in the wind, creating a strong connection to the season while referencing the storm that propels the narrative of the chapter. In contrast, the calligraphy that accompanies the Tosa leaves does not relate to the painting subjects,⁴⁴⁷ suggesting the calligraphers and painters worked independently. Hongakuin no miya took greater license with her images and text, as she did not follow a pattern based on atelier precedent or ekotoba convention. This does not suggest she ignored visual precedents or iconic motifs that had come to symbolize the individual chapters by the late seventeenth century; the abbess, rather, chose images that succinctly represented important moments in the given chapter.

⁴⁴⁴ Tyler, trans., *The Tale of Genji*, 490.

⁴⁴⁵ Nakada Takeshi, *Kagaribi; Nowaki; Miyuki; Fujibakama* [The cressets; the typhoon; the imperial progress; thoroughwort flowers] (Tokyo: Shintensha, 1984), 23.

⁴⁴⁶ Tyler, trans., *The Tale of Genji*, 487.

⁴⁴⁷ Murase, *Iconography of The Tale of Genji*, 327.

The leaf in Hongakuin no miya's album for the eighth chapter, *Under the Cherry Blossoms* (*Hana no en* 花宴), shares similar, albeit abbreviated, motifs with the Tosa album in Kyoto National Museum. The abbess' composition consists of a decorated fan spread open beneath a blossoming cherry tree; a full, silver moon rises just above a cherry tree branch. (Fig. 4.46) Above the illustration is the text, which reads:

*Aogi bakari o shirushi ni torikaete idetamainu*⁴⁴⁸

He merely gave her his fan as a token, took hers, and went away.⁴⁴⁹

The line refers to the parting of Genji and the sixth daughter of the Minister of the Right the morning after the cherry blossom festival held at the palace of Genji's father, the emperor. The sixth daughter is reluctant to tell Genji who she is and commit to an ongoing affair with him. Interrupted in his attempt to learn her identity by court ladies returning to the wing where they are, he has only time to exchange fans with her before leaving without being seen. The motif of the fan thus comes to represent the sixth daughter, as it is the only material reminder Genji has of his brief relationship with her. Unlike the fan described in the *ekotoba* as having "a painting showing a 'three-ply cherry' with a misty moon reflected on the water,"⁴⁵⁰ Hongakuin no miya depicts an aristocrat's fan, beribboned and decorated with flowers and gold powder. The other elements of the composition further identify the chapter. The moon in the sky recalls the song Genji overhears when he first sees the sixth daughter in the corridor of the palace of the Kokiden consort. Later, Genji refers to the sixth daughter as the "moon at dawn."⁴⁵¹ And the cherry blossom branch represents the festival where the main action of the chapter takes place.

The leaf for *Under the Cherry Blossoms* in the Tosa album at Kyoto National Museum depicts the scene where Genji first meets the sixth daughter, late at night after the festival, in her quarters. (Fig. 4.47) Although the original text does not describe her appearance, the *ekotoba* borrows the description of the fan from a later scene in the chapter and creates a setting for the meeting, which the Tosa album follows. The conflation of elements from the entire chapter to imagine the appearance of the characters' meeting in the *ekotoba* is similar to

⁴⁴⁸ Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji monogatari*, trans. Setouchi Jakuchō (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1996-1998).

⁴⁴⁹ Tyler, trans., *The Tale of Genji*, 157.

⁴⁵⁰ Murase, *Iconography of The Tale of Genji*, 79.

⁴⁵¹ Tyler, trans., *The Tale of Genji*, 158.

Hongakuin no miya's use of different motifs to represent the chapter, resulting in similarities in motifs used in the two leaves. Hongakuin no miya, however, differed from Tosa Mitsuyoshi in the rendering of the composition by basing it on important narrative moments in the text, whereas Mitsuyoshi based his on the directives in the ekotoba.

As seen in the above examples, Hongakuin no miya illustrated her album with visual reminders of the text that made sense to her, rather than drawing on conventional images of the *Genji* seen in *ekotoba*, digests, or previous paintings. Some of these followed convention; others did not. The knowledge she had of the text and her encapsulation of it in visual form at once informs us of the importance of the *Genji* as a primer in social etiquette as well as a necessary sign of erudition and education among elite women in Edo society.

Although originally based on primers from the mainland intended for the military elite, as class distinctions softened during the Edo period, primers for women became common for women at all levels of society. The Tokugawa bakufu division of Japanese society into four strata – samurai, farmer, artisan, and merchant – has been previously discussed.⁴⁵² Historians have referred to the breakdown of these artificially created social divisions in Edo society by the end of the eighteenth century, when the rise in popular culture began.⁴⁵³ As Donald Shively explains:

[Popular culture] is usually referred to as *chōnin* (townspeople) culture – suggesting that it was made by urban commoners for urban commoners – to distinguish it from court culture and bushi culture. This is a simplification, as of course the new culture drew on traditions existing in the upper classes, and moreover, some of its creators, such as Bashō and Chikamatsu, were of samurai background. Furthermore, there was great interest in this culture among other classes as well.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵² See Chapter Two.

⁴⁵³ See, for example, Donald Shively, "Popular Culture," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 4: *Early Modern Japan*, ed. John Whitney Hall (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 706-770, especially pages 706-713; Berry, *Japan in Print*, 240-250; and H.D. Harootunian, "Late Tokugawa Culture and Thought," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 5: *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Marius B. Jansen (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 168-258.

⁴⁵⁴ Shively, "Popular Culture," 708.

Distinction among the classes was further diminished by the wide range of occupations included within the four social levels. Mary Elizabeth Berry adds:

So great are distances within station — between, say, the urban magistrate and the rear guardsman, the silver broker and the rag dealer, the cotton magnate and the charcoal maker — that distances across status lines diminish as satisfactory measures of position. And so ample are opportunities to ignore station that the status order is drained of any totalistic salience.⁴⁵⁵

The interest in forms of entertainment created by commoners and pastimes of court culture, such as incense and tea, by members of different classes resulted in a “cultural leveling,” that further smudged the lines between traditional social classes.⁴⁵⁶ As a “body of learning” in itself of things needed to know — social etiquette, history, geography, annual events — culture became a common connection between and among social groups.⁴⁵⁷

An important feature of popular culture was the proliferation of literature related to it that helped spread cultural ideas and current trends. Didactic manuals are important references to the last category, and the inclusion of incense in manuals for women highlights its importance as a cultural trend in the late Edo period. Didactic texts distributed acceptable social behavior and knowledge to a wide range of people, men and women, elite and commoner, while the contents of the manuals reflected the very creation of the culture being spread. The ironic modernity of the texts disseminating a “traditional” culture is one of the fascinating phenomena of late Edo Japan.

References to incense, notably *jisshū kō*, the recognition of ten different types of fragrant wood, of which *Genji kō* is a variation, appear in Edo-period didactic manuals for women which were initially written for elite women, but became widespread among commoners by the nineteenth century. One popular manual from 1692, *Onna chōhōki* 女重宝記 [Record of treasures for women], explained in detail the proper way to arrange incense utensils, identify types of incense, and carry out the ritual of “hearing” incense.⁴⁵⁸ Other didactic texts from the Edo period also included *jisshū kō* as necessary to know for proper

⁴⁵⁵ Berry, *Japan in Print*, 247.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁴⁵⁸ For a transcription of the *Onna chōhōki* text related to incense see Jinbo Hiroyuki, *Kōdō no rekishi jiten* (Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 2003), 113-119.

cultural knowledge.⁴⁵⁹ While most of the readers of these didactic texts would not own or be able to do the incense ritual, as the wood and accoutrements were expensive and limited to elite women, it was still important to know about it.⁴⁶⁰

In addition to the knowledge of incense, didactic manuals for women also illustrate the importance of *Genji* symbols for cultural edification, as exemplified in examples of eighteenth-century texts in the Mitsui Bunko collection at the University of California, Berkeley.⁴⁶¹ A primer for teaching letter-writing (*ōraimono* 往来物), entitled *Tokiwa no matsu* 常盤の松 [Evergreen pine trees], published in 1704, provides instruction for letter-writing and other items necessary for proper etiquette.⁴⁶² Among the items is a banner running across the top of the page on which the chapter titles from *The Tale of Genji* are listed along with a short statement which claims the *Genji* mon are the “proper characters” (*shōbunji nite* 正文字にて). (Fig. 4.48) The banner on the following three pages includes two rows of small blocks which contain the chapter title from the *Genji*, an identifying motif, and the corresponding incense symbol. Some of the symbols repeat; the *Genji mon* for the fifth chapter, Young Murasaki, and

⁴⁵⁹ *Onna daigaku* 女大学 (1716), *Onna chūyō menō bako* 女中庸瑪瑙箱 [Women’s Doctrine of the mean agate box] (1730), and *Onna Jitsugo kyō kogane bukuro* 女実語教黄金囊 [Women’s practical language lessons golden bag] (1802) are three representative etiquette books for women that include incense. On incense as necessary etiquette for cultured women during the Edo period, See Jinbo Hiroyuki, *Kōdō no rekishi jiten* (Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 2003), 111-123.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 121. Regarding the rules regulating the items to be included in bridal trousseaux, according to rank, see Sakomura Tomoko, “Japanese Games of Memory, Matching, and Identification,” in *Asian Games: The Art of Contest*, ed. Colin Mackenzie and Irving Finkel (New York: Asia Society, 2004), 265.

⁴⁶¹ The part of the Mitsui Bunko (collection of the Mitsui family and Mitsui companies) purchased by the University of California, Berkeley in 1950 consists of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese materials, ranging from rare books and manuscripts to monographs and maps, assembled from eight private collections acquired by the Mitsui Bunko or individuals of the Mitsui family. Oka Masahiko et al., ed., “Introduction,” in *Mitsui Bunko kyūzō Edo hanpon shomoku: Kariforunia Daigaku Bākurēkōzō = Edo Printed Books at Berkeley Formerly of the Mitsui Library in the Collection of the University of California at Berkeley* (Tokyo: Yumani Shobo, 1990), 3.

⁴⁶² *Tokiwa no matsu* was written by Rankajin Kotsudō 蘭下人乞童 in 1704. I am grateful to Janice Kanemitsu for initially pointing out the inclusion of *Genji* incense symbols in didactic texts for women in the Mitsui Bunko collection.

the nineteenth chapter, Wisps of Clouds (*Usugumo* うす雲) have the same pattern: the first two lines connected, the third and fourth lines connected, and the fifth line unattached, which indicates only the fifth chapter in the actual incense competition. (Fig. 4.49) As with the *karuta* kept at the Kyoto City University of Arts, the mistakes in symbols shows how, even in this early publication released around the time the *Genji* incense game was popular in court circles, they did not refer to the actual game but were appropriated only as signs of erudition. While variations in the *Genji* incense game may have existed at this time, two chapters could not have had the same symbols pattern since each chapter had a unique scent order. The misuse of symbols indicates that the author, while accurately associating the motifs and chapter titles with the *Genji*, was not familiar with the incense game itself. Readers may have been instructed to learn *Genji* incense symbols for proper etiquette, but only for superficial recognition.

Similarly, another didactic text entitled *Onna teikin goshō bunko* 女庭訓御書文庫 [Book for women's home education], written by Shimokōbe Shūsui 下河辺拾水 in 1790, also in the Mitsui Bunko collection at the University of California, Berkeley, includes a banner across the top of some pages divided into two rows of boxes. (Fig. 4.50) The top row of each box includes the *Genji mon* for the incense game, a motif representative of the chapter, and a pair of decorated shells from the *kai-awase* (shell-matching) game from top to bottom respectively within each box. The second row gives the chapter title and a brief description of the motifs used in the top row. Significantly, the visual cues for the *Genji* are separated from the identifying text. The eye goes naturally to the top row first, so that the visual cues become the initial reminder or introduction to the narrative. The visual motifs are then corroborated by or reinforced through the bottom row of text.

The didactic texts for women in the Mitsui Bunko collection show how early incense *mon* appeared as symbols of social etiquette knowledge and associated with *The Tale of Genji*, rather than with the incense game itself. Along with prints, especially *mitate* prints, they became another visual reminder of the *Genji* during the early modern period from which viewers could claim knowledge of *The Tale of Genji* and, more broadly, inclusion in cultural matters.

The Incense Game: Perpetuation of Tradition through Play

By the late eighteenth century, cultural knowledge was expressed through the ability to visually recognize and know *The Tale of Genji* through motifs, names of characters, and textual references set forth in digests, commentaries, ukiyo-e prints, and material objects. The use of the *Genji* as a means to create a commonality among a quickly changing social order, and the phenomena of relying on an imagined past that reached back to the Heian period for

authenticity was discussed above. Here the practical means through which *Genji* was processed is investigated in further detail through the exploration of play. “Playing” the *Genji* was a way to mediate between politics and culture, to understand and absorb the past and create a level field onto which members from all classes of society had equal footing.⁴⁶³ Play was expressed through forms of entertainment outside the official norm: popular fictional narratives (*gesaku* 戯作), ukiyo-e, travel, and travel literature; in other words movement that crossed established geographical and social boundaries.⁴⁶⁴ Through travel and travel literature, especially, one was able to transverse, at least vicariously through the author’s words, and in so doing, transgress. Play was the equalizer because, if nothing else, as the definition implies, it was for entertainment, and, therefore, without political consequences. Individuals became equal before the rules set forth by the game and the one who mastered those rules was the one to follow.

Court amusements, which became synonymous with traditional court games, also became part of the culture of play occurring in the late Edo period. Traditions became established through the ritualized forms of competition in such endeavors as *kai-awase* and incense, which began in the fifteenth century, but became standardized in the seventeenth century. Though referring back to the Muromachi period, the traditions conflated with games associated with those played during the Heian period, during which *The Tale of Genji* was set. The chapter, The Plum Tree Branch (*Umegae* 梅枝) from *The Tale of Genji*, details an incense competition revolving around blending scents that takes place at the palace. Rather than trying to identify individual scents, the participants were judged on the appropriateness of the scent to the season and the aesthetic qualities of the scent. The connoisseurship of scent shown in the competition belonged to the type of competition known as *mono-awase*, or “object matching,” which emphasized the refinement of the participant, necessary to choose the most aesthetic object, over knowledge of how a game was played.⁴⁶⁵ Despite the differences in the actual practice, the use of incense as entertainment in the Heian period may have helped bring the earlier period into the imagination of the eighteenth-century (and later) practitioner.⁴⁶⁶

For the eighteenth-century imperial Buddhist nun, play not only perpetuated past culture but also a personal culture (history) as it brought the imperial family, from which court

⁴⁶³ Harootunian, “Late Tokugawa Culture and Thought,” 170-172.

⁴⁶⁴ For further exploration about travel as play, see *Ibid.*,” especially pages 172-183.

⁴⁶⁵ For a summary of the popularity of *mono-awase* during the Heian period, see Sakomura, “Japanese Games of Memory, Matching, and Identification,” 253.

⁴⁶⁶ A variant of the *kai-awase*, or *kai-ōi*, game popularized in the Edo period was also played in the Heian period. *Ibid.*, 253-256.

amusements originated, and its concomitant history closer as well. Perpetuation of tradition was also a continuance of the relevance of the imperial family. Through play, nuns continued, symbolically, a way of life that helped give them their identity and place in the social structure of Kyoto.

Games which symbolized court pastimes or triggered memories through the filter of *The Tale of Genji* were, for the most part, relatively recent creations, dating no earlier than the Muromachi period. *Karuta*, *Genji* incense, and other more specialized games like fan-throwing (*togo* and *tosenko*) became popular in the Edo period among aristocrats, so the act of play which brought associations of court culture and *The Tale of Genji*, was an early modern co-optation of cultural imagination. Much as *Genji* digests and *Genji* images of the same time period reinvented the text, while appropriating the imagined culture it idealized, so, too, did the games and images associated with the games negotiate a new culture through the *Genji* in the lives of the players.

The act of playing – a tactile process that incorporated visual, memory, and sometimes olfactory cues – helped manifest an image of the past for the players and was crucial in the personal comprehension of the past. The Hōkyōji incense album and the Daishōji incense boxes were meant to be manipulated; neither object could be fully experienced without touching, moving, or turning. The act of recalling remembered excerpts repeatedly (each time the game is played) at once connected the player with times in the past (previous games played), the memory past (the content of the text as it appeared in the games) and the present (as the game was being played) for the duration of the game. The shifting and collapsing of time during game play also highlighted the history that was the focus of the game and the lack of distance between that history and the player, as it was made real through the calling up of the past into the present.

The phenomenon that occurs during this sort of association is, of course, the fact that the text being recalled is not the entirety of the text but, in fact, a very small selection from it which, in the case of Hongakuin no miya's album, was already preselected by her as representative of the text as a whole. The abbreviated markers that became each chapter – the incense symbol, the chapter title, the painting, the excerpt – were already a filter of *The Genji*, a trigger through which Hongakuin no miya could remember the text.

The textual excerpts Hongakuin no miya chose and some of the visual motifs indicate that she was not following standardized motifs or previously created objects but instead chose images and text that had meaning for her. While it appears that Hongakuin no miya had read the text, later viewers of the album or players of the incense game might have had only Hongakuin no miya's album excerpts as a reference. The album, which made sense to Hongakuin no miya to help her recall the text itself, became Hongakuin no miya's version of

the *Genji* to later viewers/players. The reformulation of the *Genji* meant these later players saw the *Genji* through Hongakuin no miya's eyes. Without the same reference points for remembering the text as a whole, the encapsulation of the text became reduced to knowing the words and images on the album pages. While later players may have displayed the markers of cultural knowledge, affiliation with the aristocratic past, and the continuation of tradition, their engagement with the original text of the *Genji* may not have been as deep as Hongakuin no miya's.⁴⁶⁷ Play, in this way, helped to perpetuate knowledge while also continuing convent traditions.

By the Meiji period a similar phenomenon of appropriating the past through visual or tactile association was happening in the culture at large in the assimilation of the *Genji* as a marker of cultural knowledge, but made even more pertinent in the mandate of the convents – by their very existence, and spelled out in the names *bikuni gosho* and *monzeki ama jiin* – to be symbols and perpetuators of the aristocracy. As the convents were secularized at the end of the nineteenth century, there is a bittersweet, almost ironic nostalgia embedded in the games and game-playing by the abbesses.

⁴⁶⁷ An apt corollary is the *hyakunin isshu karuta* game still played today in Japan, usually around New Year's Day. Based on the Ogura collection of the *Hyakunin isshu* [One Hundred Poets, One Hundred Poems] (thirteenth century), one hundred poems compiled by Fujiwara Teika (1162-1241) and popularized during the Edo period, the *hyakunin isshu* game consists of two hundred cards. The first five lines of a poem are written on one hundred of the cards; the last two lines are written on the remaining hundred cards. The cards with the last two lines are spread on the floor. A designated reader begins to read the beginning lines of one of the poems from a card. The first person to find the corresponding end of the poem wins the cards and the point. In this way, the players are supposedly familiar with the entire poem sequence. In reality, however, one needs only to know the first few lines, or even characters, to recognize the poem's ending. Knowing how to play the game does not necessarily constitute "knowledge" of the poems. The practice today of playing *hyakunin isshu* has changed from the Edo period, when women used the *hyakunin isshu* to study calligraphy. Joshua Mostow, *Pictures of the Heart: The Hyakunin Isshu in Word and Image* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), 38 and 129. With the use of the poem sequence in textbooks and the popularity of the card game, it is clear that players were expected to know all the poems in full. Books, such as the *Hyakunin isshu hitoyo banashi* 百人一首一夜話 [One hundred poems, a story for one night] by Ozaki Masayoshi in 1833, were published to help teach the poems to players. Roger Keyes, "Hokusai's Illustrations for the "100 Poems," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 10 (1983): 317.

Conclusion

Predating the proliferation of *Genji* mon-designed objects of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Hongakuin no miya's album nonetheless symbolizes membership in this network of well- and properly-educated women. Rather than paint a *Genji* album, Hongakuin no miya painted a *Genji incense* album. The distinction is important. Unwieldy as a manual for use in the game, but still functional as such, the album bridges – or perhaps falls between – the gap of display object and game equipment.⁴⁶⁸ Whether Hongakuin no miya created it expressly for either purpose is less important than her decision to include the *Genji* incense symbols. Like the creator(s) of the Daishōji incense boxes, the choice aligned her with the game of incense and its associations of contemporary court culture, creating a tradition of past court culture seen through the filter of, and simultaneously authenticated by, *The Tale of Genji*.

Hongakuin no miya's album reflects the Edo-period interest in the incense competition and the *Genji* as it fulfills numerous roles: personal interest and knowledge of *The Tale of Genji* as befits someone of high station and education; symbolic aristocratic claiming of *The Genji* as one's personal heritage (as part of an aristocratic lineage); component of the elite culture of incense practice; element in a wider social undertaking of history and memory-making by appropriating *Genji* as a communal past. As such, it is a helpful reminder of both the individual and the communal groups to which nuns belonged.

It may be an exaggeration to say that the *Genji* incense album at Hōkyōji embodies the (imagined) past glories of aristocratic culture, the education and social standing of the abbesses there, and shared communities of culture and interest. After all, by the eighteenth century the *Genji* was synonymous with cultural knowledge in Japan, and images based on the text were recognizable for people at various levels of society. It would suffice to say that the *Genji*-decorated object is reflective of a larger cultural trend taking place outside the convent walls. Yet, fortunately, more information is known about the album: the creator, the time period, and a location for its creation. The key to understanding the incense album is through the way it stands at the nexus of text, image, memory, tradition, and contemporary interpretation. The reflection of commoner and elite interest in *The Genji* as representation of Heian culture, the perpetuation of tradition amid a weakened class, and a personal reinterpretation of *The Genji* give the album its purpose and significance.

⁴⁶⁸ Although the album is highly regarded for its aesthetic qualities at Hōkyōji, Abbess Tanaka Ekō stated she does not show the album in the *tokonoma* because its format makes it awkward to display. Private conversation, September 26, 2004.

Through this close examination of the possible functions of Hongakuin no miya's *Genji* incense album, we can see the many ways in which the album resonated with elite women in the early modern period to the present. Importantly, the *Genji* incense album is the work of one individual woman; as such, circumstances such as time period, class, personal interest, and ability directly affected the choices made for it and its subsequent reception. Other women in imperial Buddhist convents may not have had as deep an interest in *The Tale of Genji* or incense appreciation, nor have been as artistically talented as Hongakuin no miya, but all shared in an ongoing relationship with visual arts that complement and represent their lives and the society in which they lived.

In late Edo, imperial Buddhist nuns belonged, by family right, to a segment of society interested in maintaining traditional culture, yet at temporal odds with the actual culture. Too far removed from the world of *Genji* through time and social space, they joined others in recreating *The Genji* for themselves in order to maintain "tradition." The presence of objects such as the Hōkyōji incense album and the Daishōji incense boxes in the collections of their respective convents represents how the perpetuation of tradition has become part of the nuns' artistic legacy.

Conclusion

The Legacy of Women's Art at Hōkyōji

The Life of An Imperial Buddhist Nun in the Modern Era

In her book on Japanese aristocracy in late-Edo society, Takie Sugiyama Lebra relates two meetings she had with an abbess from an unnamed imperial Buddhist convent in Kyoto; the abbess was seventy-two years old at the time of the interview in the mid-1990s. Although the passage is long, the story is worth telling in full:

With her mother's death and the remarriage of her father, a *kuge* marquis, she was selected at a very young age as a suitable candidate to be a *monzeki* successor at the temple. One day, the then *monzeki* came over "to see me for a *miai* [interview] and told me to stand up, which I did immediately." Impressed with her nonresistant character (*sunao*), the incumbent accepted Ms. Z then and there. "So I passed the examination." This incumbent nun was also a *kuge* daughter, as the one before her had been, but before that, I was told, the temple had always been headed by a daughter of the reigning emperor (*naishinnō*). (This special status was a major source of pride: this nunnery, according to Ms. Z, was one of only four in the whole country that had been headed consistently by *naishinnō-san*.) The *kuge* successors were thus considered surrogate imperial princesses.

Ms. Z moved in at age five. Such a young age was desirable because a small child would still be uncontaminated by the mundane life of the outside world. The predecessor *monzeki* was a "beautiful and kind lady" who loved this successor, took baths with her, and combed her hair. Indeed, the unmarried nun practically adopted the child nun-to-be as a daughter and lavished maternal love on her. (Though Ms. Z called the predecessor "Big Sister," she also used to say she had "come out of Big Sister's belly.") The "adoptive" mother was also a teacher who taught the child both manners and sutras. At school age, Ms. Z entered a local school, but after the school day studied, in addition to sutras, the Chinese language (*kanbun*) and read Confucian classics. At thirteen, after graduation from grade school, she went through the ceremony conducted by the topmost priest of the Rinzai sect to enter the priesthood. Dressed in black, she had her head shaved and received a Buddhist name. She was now totally severed from her natal family. (Upon becoming a nun, Buddha's follower, "you

are not supposed to bow to your parents, not even to an emperor.”) Overwhelmed, Ms. Z cried.

Nevertheless, the lifestyle here was more like that of the court than an ascetic nunnery, as the temple’s main function was to preserve its royal tradition as well as to conduct memorial rites for imperial ancestors. The temple structure was a tiny imitation of the Kyoto palace, and the living quarters of *naishinnō* nuns were preserved as a *goten*, or palace. In the prewar days, when the temple was more generously funded by the Kunaishō, it had a courtly “retinue.” (When I spoke with her, however, Abbess Z had only one subordinate nun, of samurai descent, who, although older than her, had been nominated as her successor.) As a young girl, Ms. Z enjoyed reliving the ancient court life by reading with her teacher-mother *The Tale of Genji*, *The Tale of Ise*, *Kokinshū* and the like, and participating in the monthly poetry party (*utakai*) held at the temple.

Among the tokens of the glorious past were many dolls – ranging in size from one to three feet tall – given to generations of *monzeki* nuns. Showing a picture of each doll, Abbess Z and her assistant identified who or what it was. Some were models of real persons (“This is Emperor Taishō in his childhood, this is Emperor Kōmei . . .”), and all the dolls had names (“This is Chiyoko-san, that is Harunaga-san. This is a gift doll from Empress Dowager Shōken, which was a gift to her from Emperor Meiji”). The important point was that all these dolls had been possessed and played with by *monzeki* predecessors and handed down to successors. It was strange indeed to see two elderly women talking excitedly about dolls as if they were living persons. These dolls are displayed in the *goten* on special occasions – as I saw them when I visited the temple again three years later, though the rewards of my visit turned out to be more than just sentimental.

On my second visit I saw a crowd of people, mostly middle-aged women, strolling through the magnificently kept garden and looking around the temple structures. Many temple treasures were on display- painted folding screens, scrolls, and, above all, the dolls. These women, it turned out, were students in various classes – tea ceremony, handicrafts, dyeing, and so on – sponsored by the temple as a last economic resort for temple maintenance. I was surprised that the “palace” was so casually opened to outsiders, remembering how tightly it had been closed on my previous visit. From a young apprentice nun I learned that this open house was being given at the request of a leader of the temple-support association. Obviously, it was a reluctant concession by the *monzeki*. Still, said the young nun, “To make this place a tourist attraction would be unthinkable to Her Highness (*gozen*), with her pride.” These unwelcome “intruders”

were gazing at the dolls admiringly, listening to old male teachers explain what they were and thus vicariously sharing the remnants of the temple palace's glorious history. It suddenly occurred to me that the dolls have served for generations as concrete, humanlike links between the past and present, between lower-ranking *kuge* daughters and imperial princesses, between commoner onlookers and elevated *monzeki* nuns.⁴⁶⁹

The first-hand account of Lebra's meeting with one of the abbesses from an imperial Buddhist convent in the early twentieth century encapsulates the role of convents have taken in modern society. The abbess, who remained nameless in the interview, was, as she said in her own words, one of "eleven" *monzeki* abbesses. She gave the number eleven because she was unsure which of the convents were truly *monzeki* (in other words, which had abbesses with a high-enough status to warrant the title).⁴⁷⁰ Her story is tinged with longing for a lost way of life, as her personal history spanned the end of the early modern *monzeki* through the upheaval of the Meiji period to the modern reinterpretation of the convent. Although the *monzeki* system that the abbess remembered must have already been in decline when she was initiated into the convent and her memories of it perhaps already altered through nostalgic remembrance, the information she imparts about the workings of the convent and her life there remain invaluable glimpses into the world of imperial Buddhist convents as they were and as they were becoming in the twentieth century.

The abbess's status as a *kuge* (aristocrat) was elevated enough to give her an introduction, and then acceptance, into the convent. But it was a step down from previous abbesses who were *naishinnō* 内親王, imperial princesses who were daughters of the emperor and granted the special title by him.⁴⁷¹ Still, the abbess was a member of the noble class which, she points out, justified the calling of her convent (and herself) *monzeki*. The statement reflects

⁴⁶⁹ Lebra, *Above the Clouds*, 315-317.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁴⁷¹ *Naishinnō* were the female equivalents of *shinnō* 親王, or imperial prince. Until 1947, the emperor could grant the title *naishinnō* or *shinnō* to children as recognition of their place in his bloodline (in other words, legitimate children). For imperial princes, the designation meant they were seen as possible successors to the throne. Princes and princesses who were not given the designation of *naishinnō* or *shinnō*, were called *nyoō* (or *joō*) 女王 and *ō* 王, respectively. Also, an imperial nobleman who had received the tonsure could be given the title, *hōshinnō* 法親王 (priest-prince), by the emperor. In 1947 the Japanese constitution was changed; the title *shinnō* is now given only to direct male bloodline descendents of the emperor.

the special niche laid out by the convents, in which the elitism of the occupant was a defining factor in its existence.

The relationship shared by the abbess and her predecessor is useful as insight into the upbringing of young nuns designated as future abbess. While the intimacy and fondness between the two as surrogate mother and daughter may not have been reflective of a typical abbess-successor relationship, it does suggest an alternate life to that of the imperial family, in which the elder abbess was in charge of education and day-to-day childrearing. The status of imperial Buddhist clergy is shown in the author's narrative to be both high-ranking in society ("you are not supposed to bow to your parents, not even to an emperor") and at the same time outside of the imperial system, cutting off the abbess from natal ties.

Perhaps most significant aspect of the abbess' life story as it relates to the legacy of the convents today is her assertion that even after taking the tonsure, her lifestyle remained similar to that at court, "as the temple's main function was to preserve its royal tradition as well as to conduct memorial rites for imperial ancestors." Through the transmission of once-courtly arts such as tea or flowers to members of the general public; the continuation of studying classical texts such as *Tale of Genji* and *Tales of Ise*; and the display of "temple treasures," the abbess presented herself as a perpetuator of a courtly lifestyle and presented the convent as a de facto locus of the court. Indeed, while imperial Buddhist nuns play an important role in society as religious leaders, conducting memorial rites and heading functioning Buddhist temples, the public role of the convent today is closer to a museum, a place where visitors can glimpse a previously private world of court life and religious beliefs.

Hōkyōji Today: The Legacy of Women's Art

Twice during the year – the spring and the fall, when the temperature is pleasant enough to open the doors of the *hondō* and the flowers and leaves put on their best show – Hōkyōji hosts two exhibitions highlighting its doll collection and other objects in its possession. Also, on October fourteenth, the convent holds the annual memorial service for dolls (*ningyō kuyō* 人形供養), which is open to the public. These moments of display offer visitors a glimpse inside the buildings and an opportunity to see selections from its collection while generating publicity, donations, and revenue from the sale of amulets, postcards, and publications for the maintenance of the convent.

The display aspect of the convent, while not its only function today, helps to define it in contemporary society. The buildings, gardens, art, ritual implements, and daily use objects are presented to visitors who tour the convent in a manner that is different from the way the convent is usually seen. The separation of these times from the everyday function of the convent (as mentioned in the excerpt above, the convent is *not* a tourist attraction) aligns it

more as a museum, a separate space for viewing objects. As objects are removed from their daily or normal use (even if the normal use is as a temple treasure stored in a warehouse), they take on a new meaning that helps to define the convent today.

Art historian Carol Duncan argues that museum-going is a ritual in itself, eliciting from the visitor a performance of separation from daily life and intense viewing that is part of learned museum-going behavior.⁴⁷² The ritual of seeing objects in this way turns the gallery (the place where objects are gathered) into a kind of museum space. Art historian Svetlana Alpers described the change in perception of an object when it is placed in a gallery for viewing, calling it the “museum effect.”⁴⁷³ The enclosure of daily use objects and dolls into glass cases, separated and labeled for easier viewing, resemble those in museum galleries. Moreover, during the semiannual openings, the convent itself is turned into a display “case” through its views of cordoned-off rooms, which suggest the presentation of spaces as unchanging dioramas. Religious implements and sliding-door panels are all labeled and positioned to be seen.

The display of objects and inclusion of them in art history texts and exhibitions does not exclude their inherent importance or function, but adds a further layer of meaning to them. A *kai-awase* game set used by nuns and members of the court and revered at the convent for its artistic excellence, functionality, and provenance becomes in the museum setting a reminder of “royal tradition” in a vaguely located collective past. Inherent in the display of objects in the convent is the notion that it contains “visual interest,” an innate quality that makes it worthy of display.⁴⁷⁴

To borrow from Michael Baxandall’s theory of how a museum exhibit is viewed,⁴⁷⁵ the three cultural players involved in viewing objects from imperial Buddhist convents include the convents themselves, who, we can assume, display for reasons of publicity, preservation, financial necessity, and continuity of tradition; the organizers of such exhibits who want to raise awareness of the convents, create an art historical niche or a connection with the imperial family; and the visitor to the museums who seek discovery of the unknown – the world of

⁴⁷² Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London: Routledge, 1995), 12.

⁴⁷³ Svetlana Alpers, “The Museum as a Way of Seeing,” in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 26.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁵ Michael Baxandall, “Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects,” in *Exhibiting Cultures*, 34.

court, devotional images, the nuns/imperial princesses themselves. This is not to denigrate the role of exhibitions of imperial Buddhist collections, nor to discount the multifaceted value of the objects at convents, but to acknowledge a shift in their perception and a necessary reevaluation of their importance in the present-day. The “public” nature of the convent today is very limited in its scope and highly selective; the vast stores of documents and objects at convents are only beginning to be studied systematically and made public.⁴⁷⁶ On the other hand, while not “public,” convents in the Edo period, as we have seen, were not isolated halls of religious practice, but spaces of culture that engaged artistic practices seen in the court and society. The presentation of convent objects and this study of material and visual culture at Hōkyōji continues the trajectory of the convent’s place in Kyoto history started with its origin and outlined in Chapter One.

That some objects in Hōkyōji and other *monzeki* convents are displayed in museum exhibitions and have become art objects appreciated more for their aesthetic qualities than their provenance or religious significance is an inevitable corollary of the publicization of imperial convents. While the objects chosen for display may not be the most valuable objects within the convent themselves, they are important objects of the convents’ holdings today as they help define the convent to the outside world. These include (but are not limited to) Hongakuin no miya’s painted Genji incense album, which was discussed in detail in Chapter Four, Hōkyōji’s *fusuma* paintings in the *hondō*, and its doll collection. To be sure, these objects have intrinsic aesthetic value but also have other equally important measures of financial, historic, and religious value. These objects may be displayed because they are the most accessible in terms of format, style, content, or visual appeal and/or because of their attributed creators: children of emperors or painters from leading Kyoto ateliers, and have unmistakably become known as temple treasures. Without a doubt there are equally important “treasures” that are not shown but still reside at convents.

Most of the objects displayed at the temple were valuable within the convent long before they were shown to the public. Certain objects have been held in high regard since their creation because of the status of the artist and the aesthetic or religious qualities of the object itself. The intensely personal calligraphy created by Hongakuin no miya is revered through interpretation and the shared understanding of the human connections explicit in them. The same holds true for other “didactic” conventional images tweaked in court objects, like *Genji* images. The care with which the objects have been kept is proof of this high regard.

⁴⁷⁶ See, for example, Oka Yoshiko’s self-published, four-volume study of individual convents, which includes a comprehensive inventory of the texts and documents at Reikanji Imperial Convent. Oka, ed. *Nihon no shūkyō to jendā ni kansuru kokusai sōgō kenkyū*.

The phenomenon of exhibiting certain objects from convent collections in museums has changed the concept and purpose of the convents. It is the inevitable result of convent need to publicize (for maintenance, financial reasons) and outside interest in the convents as a site of “the past” or a rich source of untapped source material. The practice of exhibition at the convent (and of exhibiting objects from the convent in museums) proves the richness that is there; the visual culture that continues to reflect and define the inhabitants, and the mutability of history to shed light on the culture of the convent and give voice to the nuns who lived there. As we have seen in the previous four chapters, the “treasures” of Hōkyōji are valuable for multifarious reasons and extend to devotional and personal objects, individuals, and architecture. While the objects on display may be the same as the ones discussed in this study, it is hoped that their value as an example of “women’s art” has been complicated beyond viewing them as static symbols of court life or “the past.” Rather, the visual and material culture of the convent reveals the nexus of religious, aristocratic, and individual achievement attained by women in the early modern period.

Women in imperial Buddhist convents were not marginalized in pre- and early modern periods. Instead, they were active producers, recipients, and participants in creating visual culture in their convents. Although the rise and fall in fortunes and the general arc of aristocratic culture ebbed and flowed throughout the Edo period, we have seen that women in imperial Buddhist convents remained relevant cultural players as leaders of their convents.⁴⁷⁷ As seen in the example of Hongakuin no miya’s album, a private interest in *Genji* became part of the public trend of cultural production. Within the convent, too, the legacy of Hongakuin no miya is assured with the continual use and display of objects associated with her. She has become representative of the convent; her familial background becomes that of the convent. As the convents change and continue in contemporary society, the material and visual culture at Hōkyōji serves as a reminder and bellwether of what the convents are and what “women’s art” means to the history and culture of Kyoto.

⁴⁷⁷ Lee Butler successfully argues that court culture not only remained viable and important in the early years of the Tokugawa shogunate, but thrived as a cultural institution with lasting effect on Japanese society. He ends his study in 1680 but leaves open the question of the relevance of the court to the remainder of the Edo period. *Emperor and Aristocracy in Japan, 1467-1680*, 300-301.

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