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## Neither Nun nor Laywoman

### The Good Wives and Wise Mothers of Jōdo Shinshū Temples

At the intersection of two important questions in the study of Japanese Buddhism today—namely, the matter of who may be called a nun, and the problem of how to appraise the widespread phenomenon of clerical marriage and family-run temples in contemporary Japan—lies the story of a relatively unknown religious professional, the Shin temple wife, or *bōmori*. This article seeks to analyze the legal and educational descriptions of *bōmori* produced from the Meiji to the early Showa periods in order to locate this female religious professional both within the spectrum of Buddhist practitioners and in the context of early twentieth-century gender norms in Japan. These documents proudly enumerate the special religious status of the temple wife, while expressing some ambivalence about how women may simultaneously inhabit the roles of good wives, wise mothers, and supporting priests. As public documents, these sources tend to mirror the normative discourse on women's roles in Japan at large, but they also hint at the untold story of the *bōmori*'s religious authority.

KEYWORDS: temple wives—*bōmori*—Jōdo Shinshū—ordination—*Bukkyō fujinkai*—clerical marriage

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Our religious institution was organized around temples and teaching assemblies, and one can take the family system to be an exceptional custom of our sect. As it is clear that the establishment of the elements of our organization has rested in actuality on the power of both men and women, we can imagine that in their numbers, too, men and women have occupied equal positions.... Despite that, according to the conventional custom, the leadership of our temples and churches has been limited to male priests only, and in the Shinshū there is no system of permitting so-called “nuns” [*nisō* 尼僧]. However, in the background we can imagine the strong working of women, so-called “temple guardians” [*bōmori* 坊守], who might as well be called “untensured nuns” [*uhatsu-ni* 有髮尼]. But the name of temple guardian is a passive title not adequate to the duty of protecting our institution, and as an expression of the vocation to actively propagate the great teachings, it is unsatisfactory.

From a 1929 unsigned feature entitled, “Women’s activities within the organization,” in the Honganji-ha’s monthly journal, the *Kyōkai ichiran* 教海一瀾

RECENT STUDIES of female ordination in the Heian (794–1185) and Kamakura (1185–1333) periods have provided compelling evidence to trouble a simplistic view of “nuns” and “laywomen” as two clearly distinguishable groups within Japanese Buddhism, illuminating instead a spectrum of ordination practices and an active negotiation of ritual authenticity (KATSUURA 1989; 2002; GRONER 2002; MEEKS 2006). However, the situation of female religious professionals in the Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗, a tradition that has doctrinally eschewed but practically manifest the distinction between lay and cleric since its emergence in the thirteenth century, has scarcely been investigated.<sup>1</sup>

Shin priests,<sup>2</sup> despite commonly being dubbed “neither monk nor layman” according to the founder Shinran’s 親鸞 (1173–1262) self-description, have none-

1. The notable exceptions to this statement are Simone HEIDEGGER, who has addressed the status of temple wives and female temple priests in her work on gender and discrimination in the Jōdo Shinshū (2006; 2010), and ENDŌ Hajime, who has made important strides in illuminating the pre-modern position of women in the Shinshū (1989; 1991; 2002; 2007). James DOBBINS (2004) opened the door to this subject with his study of Shinran’s wife Eshinni (1182–1268?) and her letters.

2. I use the translation “priest” for the Japanese *sōryō* 僧侶, a term used to describe Shin clerics since the early modern period. In overseas Shin churches, which tend to follow Protestant Christian nomenclature, the common English translation is “minister.”

theless been regulated, ordained, and even ranked in accordance with legal requirements for Buddhist clerics since the early modern period. However, as noted in the above passage from the monthly journal of the Jōdo Shinshū Honganji denomination (hereafter “Honganji-ha”), there is no strong tradition in the Shinshū of ordination for women, and the closest thing to a nun that has existed since the medieval period is the Shin temple wife, known as the *bōmori* or temple guardian.<sup>3</sup> This brief passage alludes to two difficulties faced by the sect in defining the *bōmori* as a religious professional: first, how to describe such a position using the terms available in the Buddhist tradition; and second, how to overcome the contradictions inherent in investing such a domestic figure as the temple wife and mother with the authority and vocation of a religious professional. This study will confront this ambiguity as it is manifested in the modern Shin discourse on temple wives.<sup>4</sup>

Although historical evidence about the role of temple wives in the medieval and early modern periods is scarce, public documents concerning *bōmori* began to proliferate in the Meiji period (1868–1912). I utilize these sources, including a rich body of educational materials for temple wives and their lay counterparts—members of the burgeoning Buddhist Women’s Associations (*Bukkyō fujinkai* 仏教婦人会)—to trace the modern articulation of this family-based religious professional. Like public formulations of women’s roles in Japanese society more broadly, the articulation of the Jōdo Shinshū’s version of the good wife, wise mother (*ryōsai kenbo* 良妻賢母) was far from monolithic, and stemmed as much from centuries-old notions of the position of priests’ wives as from newer, Western-influenced conceptions of house and home.

### *Medieval and Early-modern Rhetoric about Priests’ Wives in the Jōdo Shinshū*

The centrality of marriage and hereditary transmission to the institutional construction of Honganji (the temple erected in conjunction with Shinran’s grave, which emerged as the dominant institution of Shin Buddhism in the fifteenth

3. In medieval Japan it was not uncommon for women to adopt the dress and title of a nun without undergoing full ordination, and we find such women in the first few centuries of the Shin movement as well (ENDO 1989 and DOBBINS 2002). However, this role was never institutionalized in the Shinshū and since the early modern period only male priests have been recognized as clerics.

4. The two major sects of the Jōdo Shinshū whose documents I will examine here are the Honganji-ha (headquartered at Nishi Honganji temple in Kyoto) and the Ōtani-ha (headquartered at Higashi Honganji temple, a few blocks away). While the particulars of these sects’ respective approaches to the regulation of clerics and their wives are of course distinct, they nearly always mirror one another’s legal or structural changes within a decade or so, and temple operations are nearly identical, so that it is fair to consider their public statements as part of a single “Shin discourse.”

century) has also been widely noted (SOLOMON 1971; TSANG 2005). The ways in which such structures have made it possible for women—in the capacities of wives, mothers, or widows—to **play leadership roles or exert influence on the organization** in ways not seen in the traditionally monastic sects are just beginning to be understood.<sup>5</sup> Concerning the local level of the early Shin movement, the studies of Endō Hajime have shown through an examination of name registries and portrait lineages that, at least in those groups affiliated with the early Bukkōji temple, husband (*bōzu* 坊主) and wife (*bōmori*) pairs were depicted as the religious leaders of local congregations (*dōjō* 道場), and this leadership position was customarily passed on to the couple's son (ENDŌ 1989).

After this, the only extant sources about temple wives before the eighteenth century are two of Rennyō's 蓮如 (1415–1499) letters addressed to congregational priests' wives in Yoshizaki (modern-day Fukui Prefecture). He refers to them by the secular term *naihō* 内方, equating them at least in nomenclature to samurai-class secular wives. Nonetheless, Rennyō speculates in these letters on the special karmic conditions that led to women being born into a temple or marrying a Shin priest. He goes on to note that she has a special obligation to be firm in her faith and sincere in her gratitude to Amida for rescuing her from what was in medieval Buddhism considered to be the rather wretched karmic condition of women:

It is truly as a result of karmic conditions [*shukuen* 宿縁] from previous lifetimes that these women have become the wives of the inn-keeping priests of Yoshizaki. They must now consider what comes after this life as the most important thing, being determined in their faith. Thus, those who have become wives must truly and firmly attain faith....

As for the way of attaining faith in the Shinshū, first, if your body is that of a woman, yours is a wretched body that possesses the deep sins of the five obstacles and the three obediences [*goshō sanshō* 五障三従]. This body has already been abandoned by the various Buddhas of the ten directions, and the Buddhas of the past, present and future. Such a pitiful body was the occasion for a solitary Buddha, Amida, to vow to rescue [women], and so he established the forty-eight vows.

Within those, in the eighteenth vow Amida pledged to save all women and wicked people. However, because of the depth of women's sinfulness and skeptical hearts, beyond that he also went so far as to establish the thirty-fifth vow to save women in particular. Because Amida labored in this way for them,

5. Early examples of the potential for female leadership based on family relationships include Ryōmyōni, the female abbess of Bukkōji (ENDŌ 2007, 223–50); Shinran's daughter Kakushinni (1224–1283), who established Shinran's memorial chapel at Ōtani, which would become Honganji (DOBBINS 2002, 80); and Kakushinni's grandson Kakunyo's (1270–1351) letter bequeathing Honganji to his wife (DOBBINS 2004, 91–93).

women must reflect deeply on this most frightful debt to the Buddha. Eleventh day of the ninth month of Bunmei 5 (1473).<sup>6</sup>

With phrases such as “the depth of women’s sinfulness” and “five obstacles and three obediences,” Rennyō refers to the contemporary Buddhist understanding that women were karmically hindered from attaining five different states of rebirth, among which was that of a Buddha. These karmic hindrances were also linked to women’s lesser religious faculties and subordinate position in society. According to medieval Pure Land thought, then, women had for eons been unable to attain Buddhist liberation as women—that is, until Amida’s limitless compassion led him to establish the thirty-fifth vow especially for them. This vow is said to provide a mechanism for women’s bodies to be reborn in the Pure Land as men, thus bypassing the presumed hindrance to their achieving Buddhahood as females. This special consideration, however, as in the case of the “evil person” (*akunin* 悪人) who is traditionally said to be the special occasion for Amida’s Primal Vow (a doctrine known as *akunin shōki* 悪人正機), results in women owing the Buddha a special debt of gratitude, as Rennyō spells out in the case of *bōmori* above.<sup>7</sup>

After Rennyō, the historical record remains stubbornly silent about the activities of *bōmori* until the eighteenth century. In the social context of the late Edo period (1603–1867), the concept of the *bōmori* accrued the connotations of samurai wives in early modern society, whose appropriate sphere of activity was deemed to be inside the home, serving as the “inside help” (*naijo* 内助) of their husbands.<sup>8</sup> For example, sermons for *bōmori* authored by Shin Buddhist scholar-priests such as Sōboku 僧僕 (1719–1762) and Tokuryū 徳龍 (1772–1858) augmented Rennyō’s primarily religious account of the *bōmori*’s existence with more contemporary notions of women’s roles.

Because these eighteenth and nineteenth century sermonizers describe the *bōmori* as both an ideal wife and mother and a privileged religious figure, they are fraught with a similar tension as we will see in the modern discourse. Overall, they tend to emphasize her domestic identity: as her husband’s assistant, she must help him to emplace the daily offerings on the Buddhist altar and to transmit the teachings to the laity. As today, the *bōmori*’s role in propagation was envisioned as providing an open and inviting presence at the temple: by attracting laity to the temple with her hospitality and kindness, she would naturally

6. See SSZ 3: 415–17. This, along with Rennyō’s letter dated the 8th day of the 12th month of Bunmei 5, known as *Osarae no ofumi*, are the only two letters that mention priests’ wives specifically. For a discussion of these two letters in modern Japanese, see OKUMOTO 1996.

7. For more on medieval Buddhist and Pure Land teachings on the salvation of women, see KASAHARA 1975; TAIRA 1992; DOBBINS 2004, 93–105.

8. For examples of non-Shinshū morality guides for women at this time, see EMORI 1994; TOCCO 2003; LINDSEY 2005.

create “opportunities for them to hear the teachings” (*buppō o kiku ki* 仏法を聞く機) (TOKURYŪ 1891, 10).<sup>9</sup> Early modern sermonizers also point out that the *bōmori* is the only person certain to be present at the temple at all times, since the priest must go out into the world to study and perform services. Further, it is noted that her husband, being a man, may not be able to communicate effectively with the female laity. From this arises the *bōmori*’s special responsibilities as a female temple resident: to protect the temple and continue to serve the Buddhas and the patriarchs in her husband’s stead, and to create connections between the temple and the laity, particularly laywomen. The fact that temple wives were explicitly expected (at least by the scholar-priests who authored such sermons, if not by the temple priests who were their husbands) to play a teaching role is exemplified by Tokuryū’s admonition that “The *bōmori* shall have no excuse for herself if she allows even a single one of her female parishioners to slide into hell” (TOKURYŪ 1891, 3–4).<sup>10</sup>

In the Edo period, her preparation to fulfill the function of religious teacher appears to have consisted of such sermons as these, presumably given to small gatherings of *bōmori* from neighboring temples, plus whatever doctrine she may have learned from her own father growing up, or from her husband after marriage. It is likely that many *bōmori* attained literacy and read scriptures or transcripts of sermons for themselves, but concrete numbers are difficult to obtain. In the Meiji period, however, accompanying the increasing availability of women’s higher education in Japan at large, we can find increasingly concerted and formalized efforts by the sect to educate the *bōmori* for her role as representative of the temple, liaison for female followers, and the mother of future priests.

#### *Women’s Education and Buddhist Women’s Groups in the Meiji Period*

Meiji, Taisho, and early Showa period educational materials for *bōmori* are composed primarily of the advice for *bōmori* put forth by Rennyō and the scholar-priests of the Edo period. These works, referred to as “the wisdom of the elders” (*sentoku no kun* 先徳の訓), were usually given a new preface stating their continued relevance for women of this new era, and were printed for the growing number of study groups of temple wives and Buddhist laywomen. This reflects an intentional continuity with earlier discourses on *bōmori*.

Similarly, the broader public discourse—beginning with the state’s own policy—on women’s roles frequently drew from older gender norms while recasting

9. For an analysis of the concept of domestic religion in these sermons, see STARLING 2013.

10. Historian Sawa Hirokatsu argues based on these sermons that the central sectarian authorities (namely, the abbots of Higashi and Nishi Honganji, respectively) hoped for *bōmori* to play an active teaching role, but he is unable to find historical sources to verify to what extent *bōmori* actually did (SAWA 2008, 123).

them as new roles for changing times. For example, some scholars have noted that the feudal ideal of the samurai wife (in which the *bōmori*'s image had been cast) became universalized by the mid-Meiji for women of all levels of Japanese society.<sup>11</sup> Further, an idealized Western model of the household became integral to the concept of the feminine sphere through the ubiquitous discussion of the importance of the *katei* 家庭 or home. Women were depicted in public discourse as being naturally disposed to serve as the leaders of a harmonious household, starting with the family's coming together in a circle of emotional and physical nourishment at the family dinner table, a concept referred to with the neologism *kazoku danran* 家族団欒. In mainstream journals with a general readership, the household was often likened to a miniature society with the wife playing the role of the domestic minister while the husband went out in the world as the foreign minister.<sup>12</sup> Jōdo Shinshū authors, writing for female audiences in sectarian-affiliated newspapers and journals such as *Katei* 家庭 (published from 1901 until 1906 at Kyōto's Kōkōdō), also frequently employed such political metaphors. They also depicted the household as a "tiny Pure Land," which could manifest the moral perfection of Amida's paradise on earth through the harmony of the family (FUKUSHIMA 2006).

The sense that these nuclear family units, led by women, were the building blocks of a strong public society lent an increasingly public significance to women's fulfillment of the role of good wife and wise mother (*ryōsai kenbo*). The "wise mother" component of this role required women to be reasonably educated so that they could see to the education of their children. The discourse on women's higher education escalated through the mid-Meiji period, culminating in the Women's Secondary School Law of 1899 (MUTA 1996, 63).<sup>13</sup> In an explicit statement of the state's strategy of educating women in order to cultivate them as wives and mothers rather than for independent roles outside the home, the Chief of the Ministry of Education, Makino Nobuaki 牧野伸顯, pronounced in 1906:

The education of women must serve the duty [*honbun* 本分] of creating good wives and wise mothers.... The general duty of women is to become someone's wife, to manage household affairs, and to raise the children. This is the same in ancient and modern times, for East and for West. (NAKANISHI 2000, 138)

While the official prescription of the *ryōsai kenbo* paradigm as articulated here by Minister Makino has been well documented, recent scholarship has also

11. See UNO 1991 and PATESSIO 2011, 17–32, for a more in-depth treatment of the formulation—from both new and old notions of gender and femininity—of the *ryōsai kenbo* ideal.

12. For a detailed treatment of the *katei* discourse and the politicization of the home during the Meiji period, see MUTA 1996.

13. For a detailed study of women's education in modern Japan, particularly as it relates to the flourishing of women's groups (*fujinkai*), see CHINO 1979.

begun the important work of illuminating the more complex nature of women's actual participation in Japanese public life (GARON 1993; PATESIO 2011; ANDERSON 2011). In this and other respects, the ideal of the *ryōsai kenbo* often seemed fairly straightforward in the state's prescriptions for women, but in reality it was not cast in stone, and was subject to constant negotiation. This is clearly evident in the case of women's evolving role in Shin Buddhist institutions at this time.

In the Shin Buddhist world, the push for women's education and the emerging concept that women as good wives and wise mothers were to be the moral backbone of public society led to a new prominence for women, particularly laywomen, within the sect, as *Bukkyō fujinkai* 仏教婦人会 (Buddhist women's groups) began to proliferate in the 1890s. This began with the establishment of study groups for women (*kōshūkai* 講習会, *hōwakai* 法話会) and aristocratic ladies' associations (*kizoku fujinkai* 貴族婦人会) in the Tokyo and Kansai regions (FUKUSHIMA 2006, 29). Buddhist reformer Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 is said to have started one of the first modern women's study groups in the Honganji-ha in 1888, called the Ladies' Teaching Assembly (Reijo Kyōkai 令女教会), but in actuality female confraternities had existed in various local areas since the late Edo period (CHIBA 2002, 59).<sup>14</sup> From the turn of the twentieth century, Buddhist women's groups in both of the major Shin sects sprung up in local districts throughout the country.

In 1908, the Honganji-ha consolidated its numerous local and regional *Bukkyō fujinkai* into a national confederation headed by the *urakata* 裏方 (the wife of the abbot of Nishi Honganji, at that time Ōtani Kazuko 大谷籌子). By the time of the first national convention in 1908, 103 regional *Bukkyō fujinkai* boasted a total membership of 200,000 women (NAKANISHI 2000, 183). In the Ōtani-ha, regional women's groups were not nationally consolidated until 1933, but by then there were some 1,500 groups, and nine sect-affiliated women's secondary schools had been established (HONZAN KYŌGAKUKA 1933, 62–64). As these women's groups proved adept at mobilization in support of causes such as women's education, social welfare, and the war effort, the amount of economic, human, and spiritual capital they wielded was considerable. As in the case of non-Buddhist women's groups, however, such gains were usually coupled with a close cooperation with the projects of the normative institutions—in the case of *Bukkyō fujinkai*, this meant both the Shin sect and the Japanese state.<sup>15</sup> Local and national Buddhist women's groups were formed as a result of both grass-

14. Many local temples' women's groups continue even today to use the early modern terms for Shin women's associations, such as *nyoninkō* 女人講 or *amakō* 尼講, rather than the more modern *fujinkai*, suggesting a continuity with pre-existing female confraternities.

15. Space prohibits a more detailed examination of the lay Buddhist women's movement here, but Nakanishi Naoki has profiled, for instance, the instrumentality of the Honganji-ha's national network of *fujinkai*, in particular the leadership of Ōtani Kazuko (1882–1911), in the establishment of the precursor to Kyoto Women's University in 1913 (NAKANISHI 2000, 176–208).



roots efforts among temple-going women and the administrative support of the sects, which envisioned the activities of these women as part of the greater project of bringing the institution into line with the changing times, and showcasing the social and political relevance of Buddhism at a time when it was frequently criticized.

In response to the success of this so-called Buddhist women's movement, the theme of *fujin kyōke* 婦人教化, or religious education for women, became ubiquitous in the publications of the major Shin sects from the mid-Meiji through the early Showa period when the public voices of the Shin sects continued to hone their narrative of women's religious status and duties by weaving together classical Shin doctrine on women's salvation with the contemporary discourse on women's roles. For example, on the occasion of Shinran's 650<sup>th</sup> memorial celebration in 1911, Nishi Honganji's publishing arm, Hōrinkan, produced the *Shinshū fujin seiten* or "Shinshū Women's Scriptures." It is a collection of the basic scriptures of the Shin tradition along with other important writings presumed by its editor, Nishitani Junsei 西谷順誓, to be of particular interest to these proliferating groups of women seeking to educate themselves in the Shin teachings. Among the texts included were classics of Shin Buddhist doctrine for women such as Zonkaku's 存覚 (1290–1373) teaching on the salvation of women, Rennyō's aforementioned letter to temple wives, and an eighteenth-century sermon for *bōmori* by the priest Sōboku.

Balancing its interest in harnessing the energy of the women's movement with its wish to encourage women's conformity to the *ryōsai kenbo* ideal, the Honganji-ha experimented with creating semi-professional religious positions for women. In September 1908, a "Women's prison chaplain training facility" (*Kangoku jokyōkaishi kōshūsho* 監獄女教誨師講習所) was established at Nishi Honganji's central seminary in Kyoto, targeting women (temple or lay) between the ages of twenty-five and fifty who had completed women's secondary school. Six months later, eleven women completed the course, and four of those were dispatched immediately to prisons in western Japan (NAKANISHI 2000, 181–82). With the creation of such professional positions for women, the sect envisioned itself a pioneer in promoting the position of women, touting it as a major advance in the "value" of women in Japanese society, and challenging them to prove their potential by rising to the challenge of this "unprecedented test" (NAKANISHI 2000, 182, citing *Kyōkai ichiran*). However, such a course was ultimately undertaken by only a few dozen in the Kyoto area, so its actual impact on women's education and status is difficult to measure.

In another case of an innovated leadership position for women, in 1909 Nishi Honganji's bylaws were amended to make it possible for women who had taken the *kikyōshiki* 婦敬式 (lay ordination) at Nishi Honganji to become certified as

female lay instructors (*jokyōshi* 女教士).<sup>16</sup> These women would be authorized to give religious lectures (*kōen* 講演), but beyond this it is not clear what function they were expected to serve. The targeted candidates for the degree included both laywomen and temple women; indeed, one of the most visible temple family women in the Nishi Honganji organization, Kujō Takeko 九條武子 (1887–1928, sister of Nishi Honganji’s abbot Ōtani Kōzui 光瑞 and a figurehead alongside her sister-in-law of the *Bukkyō fujinkai* movement), was among the first to take this certification in 1911 (NAKANISHI 2000, 182). The course served to encourage doctrinal study among leaders of the aforementioned energetic Buddhist women’s groups, and offer an official position for lay leaders (both male and female—there was also an instructor degree with no gender modifier, which was intended for male candidates) who had previously had none. Further, the lay teaching course provided temple wives with their first opportunity to formally study the Buddhist teachings, and the degree would sanction them as religious teachers beyond their previous *de facto* authority as residents of the temple.

Still, the degree was not conceived of as a stepping-stone into religious professional roles that would disrupt women’s domestic duties or empower them to upstage their husbands. Namely, the sect made no effort to open priestly ordination or *tokudo* 得度 to women at this stage. Thus, these eager moves by the Honganji-ha organization to provide religious education, social networks, and even leadership positions for women strove always to remain coherent with the dominant understanding that women’s primary duty was to support their husbands from inside the home. Still, as we might imagine, from the perspective of the Shin sects, the strategic importance of *bōmori*, who were the logical point of contact between the temples and their female lay followers, was elevated as these *fujinkai* groups continued to burgeon.

As time passed and circumstances increasingly required the sects to recognize a more public role for *bōmori*, the tension between the strong preference for *bōmori* to be exemplars of the *ryōsai kenbo* ideal as the wives and mothers of Shin temple families, and the idea that her special religious position required special religious responsibilities—some not so domestic—grew increasingly pronounced.

### *The Shin Sects’ Regulation of Bōmori in the Early Twentieth Century*

The increasing sense that formal education should be a part of women’s domestic preparation, along with the sects’ desire to mobilize the wives of temple households in support of the energetic activities of Buddhist women’s groups,

16. This is not to be confused with *kyōshi* 教師, which is the clerical degree required to become a *jūshoku* 住職 or resident priest of a temple. This lay instructor course (which was also open to men), was part of the experimentation in education for lay persons and clerics that the Honganji-ha had been undertaking since the 1880s (TANIGAWA 2008).

resulted in the establishment of study or lecture groups specifically for temple wives (*bōmori kōwakai* 坊守講話会 or *jizoku fujinkai* 寺族婦人会). A number of educational tracts were produced for use in these study groups, in particular on the landmark occasions of Shinran and his youngest daughter Kakushinni's (1224–1283) 650<sup>th</sup> memorial anniversaries, which were celebrated in 1911 and 1932, respectively. At the same time, as Shin Buddhist institutions and governing documents were established in line with the changing legal requirements for religious groups in Japan, the *bōmori's* role was increasingly codified and inscribed into the official regulations of the sect. Here I will examine these two types of sources—educational and regulatory—in an effort to trace the ongoing struggle to articulate the *bōmori* as both the embodiment of the ideal housewife and a special religious personage at the temple. On the domestic side, we find a frequent idealization of the temple wife as the supporter of the resident priest (*jūshoku*) from behind the scenes, and an encouragement for the *bōmori* to be educated in the teachings and strong of faith so that she could better support her husband in his own vocation. On the other hand, the suggestion that she should also be a co-priest or a replacement priest for her husband, which was sometimes alluded to in early modern sermons for *bōmori*, appears here even more pronounced. This latter role included a duty to open the temple to the laity and actively spread the teachings to them in informal settings, and further required the *bōmori* be prepared to step into the more visible role of the primary temple priest if her husband should become unable to perform his duties.

The earliest of the modern statements of the *bōmori* ideal is perhaps the explanation below, issued under the authority of Ōtani Kōen 大谷光演, the twenty-third abbot of Higashi Honganji (the headquarters of the Ōtani-ha). It was published in the sect's monthly journal *Shūhō* during Shinran's 650<sup>th</sup> memorial year of 1911:

The temple is said to be the “garden of the dharma” [*minoru no niwa* 御法の庭], a place where the Buddha can come from the Pure Land and appear to us. Thus, a person who lives in a temple, though she herself may not be a priest, should keep in mind that she has come to live in such a place as a result of significant karmic causes. She should above all revere the Buddhas and the patriarchs as the most dear; when followers come to visit the temple, considering them to be guests of the Master [Shinran], she should never treat them rudely. She should strive to assist the priest in spreading the Buddhist teachings, and especially at such times as when the priest is absent, it would be wonderful if she would share the flavor of the dharma with the laity. She should not, however, neglect the education of the temple children, as these children will someday take over the temple and continue on in spreading the dharma.

(*Shūhō* 118 [July 1911]: 3)

The abbot draws from a tradition reaching back to Rennyo in distinguishing the *bōmori* in both status and responsibility from her lay counterparts. The idea that the laity are actually the guests of Shinran and Amida, and that the *bōmori* is their hostess, is found in both the writings of Rennyo and early modern sermonizers. The abbot here suggests that, particularly when her husband is absent, the *bōmori*'s identity as a temple person obliges her to work to transmit the teachings to the laity herself. Such a teaching role, however, should never be to the detriment of her duties as the mother of the temple's successor. The line between wife and mother and religious specialist is carefully toed.

The Ōtani-ha continued upon this line of reasoning fourteen years later with the release of the Regulations for Temple Wives (*Bōmori kitei* 坊守規定) in 1925, which officially allowed for a temple wife to act as a replacement priest in her husband's absence:

Article 1: Aiming for the success of the religious household, so that the domestic help of the resident priest may be completed for the sake of her own practice and the teaching of others, we hereby establish prescriptions for *bōmori* and set out the *bōmori* registry...

Article 2: The *bōmori* shall, with good deportment, gravity and austerity, perform the duties of the wife of the religious household. Of course she will be an exemplar for the laity, but she will also take other initiatives concerning the worship of the Buddhas and the patriarchs and the continuation of the teachings [*busso sūkei hōgi sōzoku* 仏祖崇敬法儀相続]. And, in order to practice herself and teach others, she shall provide domestic help for the resident priest.

(*Shinshū* 87 [September 1925]: 1)

Among her duties as a temple resident and supporter of the *jūshoku*, the *bōmori* is to ensure the “worship of the Buddhas and the patriarchs and the continuation of the teachings.” This most likely refers to the domestic side of carrying out ritual events, such as cleaning, serving tea to the guests, and servicing the Buddhist altar with flowers and sustenance on a daily basis, which are still the most common duties of temple wives today. But the regulations go on to provide an official registry for the names of *bōmori* at the central headquarters, and a channel by which the *bōmori* could attain credentials for performing basic rituals, specifically the morning and evening service of the temple, and monthly services at parishioners' homes. After taking the *bōmori kikyōshiki* 坊守婦敬式 or lay-ordination ceremony (Article 9), she would be permitted to wear “nun's robes” (*nie* 尼衣, specified in Article 10). Once she was permitted to wear the robes, she would be eligible to sit for an exam that would qualify her to perform rituals (Article 11).<sup>17</sup>

17. See *Shinshū* 87 (September 1925). The term “nun's robes” for the *bōmori*'s clerical garments was changed to “*bōmori*'s robes” a few years later, when she was also assigned a particular type of *kesa* 袈裟, the ritual vestment worn by Shin priests. See *Shinshū* 304 (February 1927).

An article in the next month's issue of *Shinshū* noted the significance of this new official allowance for the performance of basic rituals by *bōmori*:

*Bōmori too can now publically perform rituals:* I do not know how things were in the past, but in accord with the changing times, the jobs a resident priest must perform have become more and more numerous.... Thus, he cannot possibly be in the temple at all times, often being called to faraway schools or preaching facilities to work.

At such times, who shall perform the morning and evening services, or the rites at parishioners' homes? Nowadays, rather than enlisting the services of a substitute or assistant priest (some temples may not even be able to afford it), usually the best solution is for the *bōmori* to take the resident priest's place. For being close with the parishioners and getting good results in propagation, it is really best if the *bōmori* does these things herself rather than relying on an outside priest. Particularly when the resident priest passes away, when there are children at the temple and the finances are tight, it is truly admirable when the *bōmori* is able to act as the priest's substitute to a certain degree.

Of course, with these weighty privileges also come weighty responsibilities. When she goes out to perform rituals for the parishioners, if she were to run her mouth irresponsibly, cause disturbances among her parishioners or within a household, or confuse ideas by freely spouting off about doctrine—she can't be easily replaced as if she were an outside substitute priest. Thus, we must take meticulous care, but I hope that with these new regulations the duty of the *bōmori* will progress actively. (*Shinshū* 88 [October 1925]: 19)

The article's gist is that in the absence of the resident priest, his wife, being already familiar with the parishioners and physically present at the temple, is the most logical person to serve as his substitute. Its wording tends to emphasize the aspects of the *current* religious and social environment that necessitate the *bōmori*'s being certified for greater religious responsibilities—for example, the resident priest's increasing need to perform work outside of the temple in line with the expansion of education facilities or new types of propagation activities. However, these regulations (and the pronouncement of the abbot that preceded it by fourteen years) were not revolutionizing the *bōmori*'s identity, but rather entreating *bōmori* to fully embrace the religious duties incumbent upon them as co-clerics of the Shin temple. To encourage and regulate such activities, the sect provided an official channel for *bōmori* to acquire formal education in the teachings (in line with its rapid construction of training and educational facilities for priests and temple successors throughout the country), and some bureaucratic recognition, in the form of a registry and robes, of her hitherto de facto authority. It seems safe to presume that even before this bureaucratic channel was opened, it was not unheard of for *bōmori* whose temple lacked an able-bodied male priest to step sideways into the male religious professional's role. Indeed, the above article mentions the

danger of temple women overstepping their authority by “freely spouting off about doctrine”—though we are not sure whether such an admonition was based in historical precedent or merely the fears of the author. Nonetheless, it is fairly clear that these steps were being taken in order to regulate what was already being practiced.

The utilization of this official channel, once it was made available, was surprisingly sparse, however: the first administration of the *bōmori* lay ordination ceremony drew only nineteen participants from thirteen different prefectures, and subsequent administrations were unevenly attended, totaling about 230 recipients over the next ten years.<sup>18</sup> This is a rather small number considering that there were roughly 8,500 parish temples in the Ōtani-ha (HONZAN KYŌGAKUKA 1933, 59). It is difficult to say for sure whether this was due to the disinterest of *bōmori* in pursuing a formal education in the Shin teachings, their reluctance to attempt to perform rituals themselves, or their inability to travel to the sect’s headquarters to take an exam and log their names in the *bōmori* registry, considering that their overriding duty was understood as constantly guarding the temple. I would assert that more *bōmori* did not take advantage of this training both because they were unable and because it was simply not considered necessary to do so. Certainly, a temple wife (and her predecessors dating back twenty generations) would have been considered a *bōmori* by her local congregation whether or not she had logged her name at the sect’s headquarters or undertaken a lay ordination ceremony. Her practical authority as a fill-in priest, in other words, derived not from her centrally recognized credentials as such, but from her position as an adult temple family member.<sup>19</sup> The Ōtani-ha’s first attempt at a centralized registration and credentialing system for the position of temple wife was thus slow to take hold.

In the Honganji-ha, the first modern codification of the *bōmori*’s role was given in the *Guidelines for Temple Wife Study Groups* (*Bōmori kōwakai gaisoku* 坊守講話会概則). These were to be a blueprint for the establishment of district and regional temple wife associations. Nishi Honganji released the guidelines in 1916, and the goals of such groups were enumerated as follows:

To enliven the faith of the *bōmori* and develop her knowledge with regards to doctrine. For her own practice and the teaching of others, she should carry out the domestic help of the resident priest.

(WATANABE 1999, 115, citing *Bōmori kōwakai gaisoku*).

18. See *Shinshū* 309 (July 1927): 12. On at least one occasion, it was cancelled due to lack of applicants (*Shinshū* 310 [August 1927]: 6).

19. The differentiation of sacerdotal authority among temple family members is examined in greater detail in STARLING 2012, where I discuss the opening of *tokudo* ordination to women in the 1930s and 1940s and the unofficial priestly activities of temple widows even before this time.

Although her domestic identity is emphasized, education and a strong faith are envisioned as necessary components for her to successfully perform her role as the resident priest's female assistant.

As for the content of this education, the two major Shin sects' production of religious booklets for *bōmori* proliferated over the next decade; these were intended for use in such study groups as the above *bōmori kōwakai*, of which there were numerous local incarnations in both of the sects. For example, on the 650<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shinran's death, an occasion for intense propagation, expansion, and charitable activity in the Shin sects, Higashi Honganji published a volume for the moral and religious edification of temple wives (IKAI 1912). The first page of this volume is the verse on the transformation into a man (*henjō nanshi* 變成男子) from Shinran's *Jōdo wasan*, which stands alone:

So profound is Amida's great compassion  
That, manifesting inconceivable Buddha-wisdom,  
The Buddha established the vow of transformation into men,  
Thereby vowing to enable women to attain Buddhahood.

(IKAI 1912, 1; English translation from HIROTA 1997, 341)

Such placement of the verse suggests that the author not only assumed his readers were already familiar with it (it apparently does not require any explanatory introduction), but that they could stand to be reminded of it, and perhaps hold it in the forefront of their minds as they read the proceeding pages. The verse illustrates the modern continuity with medieval and early modern Shin accounts of women's salvation: namely, that women's wretched karmic state had necessitated special consideration by the Buddha Amida, who through the thirty-fifth vow provided for their liberation by allowing them to be transformed into men upon rebirth in the Pure Land. Its inclusion at the outset of this volume thus served to remind *bōmori* that they were not exempt from the karmic hindrances borne by all women, and that only through Amida's compassionate concern had they been offered a path to salvation.

The book contains thirteen lectures by contemporary teachers regarding women's salvation and the special virtues required of *bōmori* as residents of the temple, wives of the Shinshū cleric who is "neither monk nor layman," and mothers of the temple's children. Finally, classics of Shinshū propagation to women are appended, including Zonkaku's *Teachings on Women's Rebirth* (*Nyonin ōjō kikigaki* 女人往生聞書), a collection of teachings for women attributed to Rennyo (*Nyonin kyōkeshū* 女人教化集), the *Essential Selections for Women* (*Nyonin saiyōshō* 女人最要鈔) by Rennyo's son Jitsunyo, and miscellaneous scriptures and instructions of relevance to temple wives (among these is Rennyo's letter to the wives of inn-keeping priests at Yoshizaki, discussed above). The tract thus emphatically reiterates the medieval Shin Buddhist view of women's salvation and the role of *bōmori*.

In another landmark memorial anniversary for the Shin sects, 1932 marked the 650<sup>th</sup> year since the death of Kakushinni, Shinran's youngest daughter, who cared for him at the end of his life and later effectively founded the Honganji temple by establishing Shinran's mausoleum. Her memorial festivities prompted much public reflection in both of the major Shin sects on the role of women in the religious institution, as well as the production of a wealth of educational materials targeted at both lay Buddhist women's groups and *bōmori* in particular.

In 1932, the Honganji-ha published the *Sentoku bōmori kun* 先徳坊守訓 in conjunction with the central headquarters of the National League of Buddhist Women's Groups. This book contains no new material, but instead is a collection of religious and moral guidance for *bōmori* from important scholar-priests of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including Sōboku, Tokuryū, Rizen 履善 (1754–1819), Ryū'on 龍音 (1800–1885), Engetsu 円月 (1818–1902), and E'un 惠雲 (1857–1930). Like the Ōtani-ha's 1912 *Bōmori no oshie*, the *Sentoku bōmori kun* emphasized adherence to the wisdom of the elders of the Shin tradition.

On the heels of Kakushinni's memorial celebration, the Ōtani-ha released the *Bōmori kyōhon* 坊守教本 (Book of teachings for *bōmori*) in 1933, which was edited by Higashi Honganji's Doctrinal Study Department and published by Hōzōkan, the publishing arm of Higashi Honganji. In an appendix, the chief of the Doctrinal Study Department, Asakura Keiyū 朝倉慶友, explained the goals of the publication:

On the occasion of the recent 650<sup>th</sup> memorial service for Kakushinni at the head temple, the roughly 1,500 women's groups in our sect were joined together, forming the Shinshū Ōtani-ha National League of Women [Shinshū Ōtani-ha zenkoku fujin renmei 真宗大谷派全国婦人連盟]. Reflecting on the spirit of Kakushinni, we seek to make the spirit of Shinshū women respond to the times, and thus we have advanced this campaign to strengthen the Buddhist hearts of our nation's women [*zennihon fujin no busshinka* 全日本婦人の仏心化].

This is a long-running patriotic campaign by the mobilized laywomen of our parish temples to improve our households in order to purify society. *Bōmori* in particular, since they shoulder the grave responsibility of performing the domestic assistance to their husband's priestly vocation, must participate in this movement, standing at its forefront.... Thus, *bōmori* must certainly work to cultivate themselves, so in addition to the publication of the Guidelines of the Study Group of Temple Women [*Jizoku fujin kōshūkai kisoku* 寺族婦人講習会規則], we have also published this book. (HONZAN KYŌGAKUKA 1933, 1)

The guidelines mentioned here refer to a blueprint provided by the sect for establishing local study associations of temple wives, much as Nishi Honganji had done eighteen years earlier. Such gatherings for study, discussion, and group activities had taken place for decades in some areas, but on the occasion of



Kakushinni's memorial anniversary, the sect made a concerted effort to promote these, and to provide materials for *bōmori* to study.

The authors of the *Bōmori kyōhon* cite the *bōmori*'s relatively advanced status as a point of pride in the Shinshū tradition, noting the uniqueness of the Shinshū's practice of clerical marriage, and going on to boast of the aristocratic pedigree of the wives of successive generations of Honganji abbots. Finally, they idealize the role of women in the early Shinshū by reading onto their actions the contemporary ideal of good wives and wise mothers:

It is not overstating it to say that our organization today is dependent upon Eshinni's domestic help, Kakushinni's effort, and Rennyō's mother's advice. Isn't even the potentially weak power of women truly great? You, the *bōmori* of Jōdo Shinshū temples, must make the admirable traces of these women your role models, and further devote yourselves to the education and upbringing of our children.  
(HONZAN KYŌGAKUKA 1933, 47)

Women in the supporting roles of wife, daughter, and mother are exalted as critical to the establishment and thriving of the Honganji institution itself. This ideal is then applied to the *bōmori* readers of the volume, as they are urged to dutifully perform the role of wise mothers to the temple children, as their role models in Shin history have putatively done. Although the *Bōmori kyōhon* overwhelmingly stresses the domestic aspect of the *bōmori*'s duties (that is, to provide domestic assistance to the priest's public work), the potential for the *bōmori* to expand her realm of expertise into matters more religious or sacerdotal is anticipated:

In those temples which lack a resident priest, or where the resident priest is frequently out, the *bōmori* should take his place, not neglecting the reverence of the Buddhas and the founders, working to continue the teachings, seeing to the financial operation of the temple, and relieving the resident priest of any worries about the future.

In addition to providing the resident priest's domestic help in running the temple [*dōjō* 道場] as a place for propagation and worshipping the Buddha and the founders, the *bōmori* must also work to spread the teachings in her local area.  
(HONZAN KYŌGAKUKA 1933, 43)

Thus, while the purveyors of normative standards for the duties of temple wives were more comfortable emphasizing her identity as a good wife and wise mother, they also admitted that her status as "co-cleric" of the temple could require her to step into more visible or religiously authoritative roles if her husband were absent, and even took an apparent pride in the long-standing existence of such a privileged position for women, which had traditionally been unique to the Shinshū.

Amidst this mobilization of *bōmori* for spiritual causes, we can also witness how the older narrative of the religious position of *bōmori*, dating back to the time of Rennyō, was stitched together with the ideology of mobilization in support of causes

more political in nature—namely, the wartime operations of the Japanese state. In 1932 Ōtani Kinuko 大谷絰子 (1893–1974), who as the wife of Nishi Honganji’s abbot doubled as the General Secretary of the League of Buddhist Women (Bukkyō Fujin Rengō 仏教婦人連合), delivered a speech directed specifically toward *bōmori* at the league’s national gathering.<sup>20</sup> The article below from the Honganji-ha’s monthly journal *Kyōkai ichiran*, entitled “The Duties of Temple Women,” introduces the special position of *bōmori* and notes Ōtani’s advice for temple wives:

To the extent that [the *bōmori*] lives in a temple, all of her food, clothing, and shelter are none other than the goods of the Buddhas and the patriarchs, the faithful gifts of the parishioners. This is the reason she is unlike a lay housewife, and that she has a special responsibility to bear.

That’s why last month the General Secretary of the League of Buddhist Women Ōtani Kinuko directed counsel particularly to the nation’s temple women. First, she [urged *bōmori*] to be elated at the wonderful good fortune of having a *bōmori*’s body. And, as was written by the abbot Rennyō, she explained that those who would become wives [of priests] must first settle their own faith, and understand that which is most important for their liberation from *samsara*. They must practice Buddhism themselves and teach others, and strive diligently in activities to repay their debt to the Buddha.

(“Jizoku fujin no ninmu,” *Kyōkai ichiran* 792 [December 15, 1932]: 2)

In the article’s comments about the *bōmori*’s special obligation resulting from her material dependence on the laity’s faith in Amida, the early modern discourse on *bōmori* is reiterated nearly verbatim. Further, Ōtani quotes Rennyō’s letters in entreating temple women to begin by “settling their own faith” and being diligent in activities that would contribute to the repayment of their gratitude to the Buddha. In a discursive pivot common to Buddhist discourse from this era, the abbot’s wife goes on to conflate this debt to the Buddha (*butsu’ōn* 仏恩), with one’s debt to the nation (*koku’ōn* 国恩), equating the *bōmori*’s efforts in the service of the country to her practice of grateful service to the Buddha.<sup>21</sup>

In the tumultuous decade that followed Ōtani Kinuko’s 1932 remarks, the increasing absence of male priests due to deployment to overseas missionary or

20. The abbot’s wife (known as the *urakata*) is depicted in the sectarian literature as a paragon and a role model for the nation’s *bōmori* and for Buddhist women in general. We can thus construe her comments at this large sect-sponsored event to be roughly representative of the message that Nishi Honganji’s administration hoped to impart to *bōmori*. A more detailed examination of her strategies as a public speaker and her role (and that of her predecessors) as a leader of Buddhist women will have to wait for another occasion.

21. Traditionally such activities (known as *butsu’ōn hōsha* 仏恩報謝) would have referred to religious activities such as reading or transmitting the teachings, but the tendency to conflate or at least reconcile such obligations with more civil or secular duties is long-standing in the Shinshū, dating back at least as far as Rennyō; see ROGERS 1991, 299–315.

military service would confront the Shin sects more directly with the dilemma that pervades the above discourse. Administrators of the Jōdo Shinshū institutions had to measure their preference for *bōmori* to fulfill the stay-at-home role of good wives and wise mothers of Shin temple families against the need to utilize them as substitute clerics who could seamlessly assume the authority of their husbands or fathers in order to continue the temple's daily operations. A more detailed account of this later episode in the articulation of the *bōmori*'s role, in which temple wives were ultimately ordained and recognized by the sect as proxy priests, will have to wait for another occasion.

### *Conclusion*

Although the *bōmori*'s story until the modern period remains largely unwritten due to a lack of documentation, the above study is an attempt to understand her role as a domestic religious professional through the lens of the educational and legal documents produced by Shin priests and administrators from the Meiji through the early Showa period. As a distinctly religious identity emerges for the Shin temple wife, we may perhaps add this female Buddhist professional to our now more nuanced categorization of “nuns” from earlier periods of Japanese history. The *bōmori* has, after all, been quietly assisting in the leadership of Shin congregations for some seven centuries.

By focusing on *bōmori*, we also gain a better understanding of the position of contemporary wives in other Buddhist sects.<sup>22</sup> From the explanations of how husband and wife should work in tandem to spread the teachings to the laity and “serve the Buddhas and the patriarchs” through religious services, we get some idea of how marriage may be woven into what was once a putatively monastic religious profession, that of the Buddhist monk.<sup>23</sup> For instance, the sects of the Jōdo Shinshū were eager to mobilize temple wives in response to the growing influence of *Bukkyō fujinkai*. At local temples, *bōmori* often serve informally as a liaison to lay women's study or pilgrimage groups, and such a role is frequently played by contemporary wives in non-Shin sects as well. Finally, in these teachings' explanations of the wife's valued role in overseeing the material elements of Buddhist worship—such as receiving and managing the contributions of the laity, servicing the Buddha's altar with rice and flowers, and maintaining an inviting physical space in which to receive the laity—our attention is drawn to

22. From the important work of Noriko KAWAHASHI (1995) and Stephen COVELL (2006) on priests' wives in the Sōtō and Tendai schools respectively, we have seen how non-Shin sects have struggled to reconcile their history of asserting a monastic ideal with the now nearly universal reality of family-run temples.

23. It is important to note that exceptions to this ideal are abundant in Japanese Buddhist history; see for example, NISHIGUCHI 1987, 184–201.

the religious dimensions of the temple wife's domestic role as hostess and home economist. While these activities may resemble those of secular housewives, they carry additional significance when carried out in a temple home.

The *bōmori*'s proponents consistently assert her religious status as distinct from her lay counterparts. Looking back at the premodern sources, we can discern that the *bōmori* has consistently been thought of as the female co-cleric of the congregation, even while various aspects of that role were emphasized or understated in public representations, depending on societal norms and the polemical concerns (or simply the limited knowledge) of male authors. By closely examining normative descriptions of the *bōmori*, and by keeping in mind that such sources necessarily describe the wishes of the male executives of the sect rather than the reality of women's activities, I have revealed the possibility that sectarian regulations and the gradual provision of channels for clerical certification for temple wives may have been merely a delayed accommodation by the sect to the reality of temple wives' practically recognized authority as proxy priests at the temple.

We can be fairly sure that female temple residents consistently engaged in informal teaching encounters with the laity, such as over tea at the temple. In such venues, some wives may have "spouted off freely about doctrine," but others may have studied carefully before speaking. We can further imagine that temple wives, in the event that their husband passed away while their temple lacked a successor, occasionally stepped into more public or authoritative teaching roles based on the practical authority of their residence in the temple, even before priestly ordination was made legally available to women in the Shinshū in the early Showa period.<sup>24</sup>

It should be obvious by now that these educational materials reveal next to nothing about the subjectivity of temple wives—for instance, whether they were eager or reluctant to embody religious authority beyond that of a normal housewife, as they are often encouraged to do in the prescriptive literature; whether they were successful in construing all of their material belongings as "none other than the goods of the Buddhas and the patriarchs, the faithful gifts of the parishioners"; or how they understood certain Shin doctrines, especially teachings about women's karmic inferiority. Recent and forthcoming studies of Japanese Buddhism based on ethnographic research should do much to fill in the gap between prescriptive accounts and everyday life at Buddhist temples.

Despite the obvious limitations of the sources examined above, I would like to cautiously reflect on the potential value of these texts. Because *bōmori* as religious professionals are ultimately gendered—their status at the temple contingent upon

24. At the highest level of the Shin institution we know of two historical examples (Ryōmyōni 了明尼 [1294–1376] and Shin'ini 真意尼 [1850–1924]) in which widows become recognized abbots of Bukkōji temple, only to pass on the abbacy to male successors when they came of age (ENDŌ 2007, 224).

their family relationships to current, past, or future priests—the public articulation of their role has taken place within the broader discussion of the proper role of women in Japanese society. The markedly Buddhist formulation of domesticity we find in these texts both shaped and was shaped by broader notions of what was possible and desirable for women in Japan at the time of their publication. Prescriptions for *bōmori* thus enrich our understanding of the contours of the *ryōsai kenbo* ideal as it was hashed out in public discourse, and open an important window onto the limits and possibilities for the good wife and wise mother of Buddhist temples.

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