

## Liminal Journeys Pilgrimages of Noblewomen in Mid-Heian Japan

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*Even though Heian noblewomen had very sedentary lifestyles, they still engaged in frequent pilgrimages to temples near the capital. This paper examines the rituals that constituted their pilgrimages, or monomōdē, and their motivations to undertake these religious journeys. These women were of aristocratic background and therefore commanded considerable wealth—a factor that naturally shaped their pilgrimages, turning them not only into expressions of personal faith but also displays of power and status.*

A man is more or less free to travel eastward or even to China, but there are so many hindrances for a traveling woman that I understand it to be impossible.

— Ex-Emperor Go-Fukakusa, Towazugatari

INFORMED BY EARLY PICTURE SCROLLS such as the *Genji monogatari emaki*, our image of a Heian court lady is primarily stationary. Laden with multilayered robes, the Heian lady occupies the inner chambers of a mansion. The words spoken by Ex-Emperor Go-Fukakusa to Lady Nijō in the Kamakura period are even more appropriate in the Heian period.<sup>1</sup> And yet Lady Nijō defied Go-Fukakusa's words and traveled as far as Ise and Zenkō-ji. Heian ladies were not as adventurous as their Kamakura successors, but even they made sacred journeys to temples outside the capital. Following the proper ritual, a Heian lady could venture forth and undertake a physical journey, an activity thought to be open primarily to men. A look at their diaries shows that noblewomen made such journeys quite frequently.

\* This paper is based on the author's M.A. thesis, completed in 1995. The author owes special thanks to Professor Helen Hardacre (Harvard University), Stephen Forrest, and Duncan Williams for their generous assistance and support.

<sup>1</sup> The above quote is from BRAZELL 1973, p. 221.

One challenge that a study like this faces is the scarcity of detailed evidence. Even though noblewomen's pilgrimages are a common theme in most of the literary works of the Heian period, the evidence that these sources provide is limited in number, scope, and detail. It is also bound by stylistic and literary conventions making it virtually impossible to establish statistics or to move beyond the practices of the aristocratic elite. Nevertheless, these sources provide us with a rare chance to survey personal pilgrimage accounts, many of them written by women. To supplement these literary accounts, this study also draws upon other sources from courtiers' diaries to pictorial illustrations of pilgrimages. These sources also need to be approached with caution, but they do help us to piece together a puzzle albeit incomplete.

In search of a helpful approach we might turn to Alan Morinis, who argues in his introduction to *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*:

It is an important task...to plot the boundaries and analyze the meanings that different cultures assign to the sacred journey.

It is also important to note and trace the connections, both ideological and practical, that relate a pilgrimage to the socio-cultural, political, and economic context in which it is embedded. (MORINIS 1992, p. 3)

In the context of noblewomen's pilgrimages, this would mean that instead of regarding these pilgrimages as unsuccessful imitations of the practices of mountain ascetics or as a decadent prototype of later popular pilgrimages, we need to examine them on their own terms. We also need to keep in mind Helen HARDACRE's point in her article "The Cave and the Womb World" (1983, p. 149) that male and female pilgrims can experience one and the same ritual in entirely different ways. We must follow the rituals that accompanied noblewomen's pilgrimages and listen to the motivations that caused them to go on pilgrimage in the first place. Once we view noblewomen's pilgrimages from this angle, it becomes clear that the display of power and wealth was a defining element and that Heian pilgrimages were gendered in regard to destination, ritual, and motivation.

#### *Monomōde or the Pilgrimages*

When we use the term "pilgrimage" for sacred journeys in the mid-Heian period, we have to be careful not to apply anachronistic notions to it. In contrast to many early-modern and modern pilgrimages in Japan, Heian noblewomen's pilgrimages to temples did not

have a circular shape or a fixed number and order of stations. Their pilgrimages were directed at one temple at a time, although the journey could contain a number of conventional overnight stops including temples. The temples were located in what can be termed a horizontal and vertical threshold zone. In other words, they were usually situated on foothills (not on tall mountain tops) in a peripheral zone around the capital of Heian-kyō (modern-day Kyoto; see figure 1). In the Heian period when transportation was difficult, a sacred journey was not required to be long.

What, then, was a sacred journey in the mid-Heian period? In

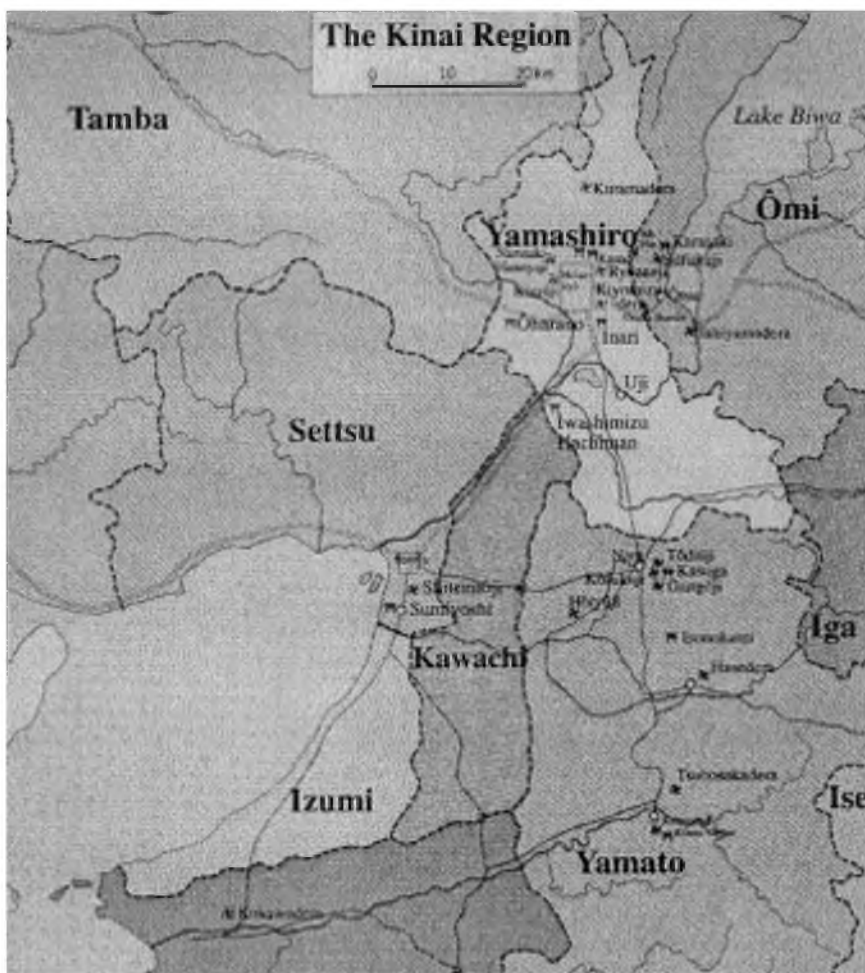


Figure 1. Map of Heian-kyō and its vicinity.

Japanese texts from the Heian period, pilgrimages are called *monomōdē* 物詣 (from *mōzu* 詣づ, to go to a place that is revered highly, especially to a temple or a shrine; believed to have developed from *maizu* 参出づ) or *mairi* 参 (to go to a place that is revered highly, especially to a temple or a shrine). Thus we can say that for Heian aristocrats a pilgrimage was a journey to a sanctuary such as a temple or a shrine.

What attracted pilgrims were temples known for their miracle efficacy, in other words miracle temples. Kannon was clearly the most popular deity venerated at these miracle temples. Furthermore, the most popular pilgrimage temples belonged to three sects: Tendai, Shingon, and Hossō. The most popular temples among noblewomen were Ishiyama-dera 石山寺 (Shingon since 925, main image Kannon) and Shiga-dera 志賀寺 (main image Miroku) or more precisely Sūfuku-ji 崇福寺 in Ōmi, Hatsuse-dera 初瀬寺 (also Hase-dera 長谷寺; 990-1588 Hossō, main image Kannon) in Yamato, Shitennō-ji 四天王寺 (Tendai; main image Kannon) in Settsu, Kiyomizu-dera 清水寺 (Hossō, main image Kannon), and Kōryū-ji 広隆寺 (since mid-eighth century Shingon; main image Yakushi), also called Uzumasa 太秦, in Yamashiro. Temples that were not universally popular but appear in individual works in connection with female pilgrims are Narutaki Hannya-ji 鳴滝般若寺, Kurama-dera 鞍馬寺 (890s-1110s Shingon, 1110s Tendai; main image Bishamonten, but according to the *Konjaku monogatari* this Bishamonten is identical with Kannon), and Ryōzen-ji 靈山寺 (Tendai; main image Shaka; modern name Shōbō-ji 正法寺). Many works also mention pilgrimages to anonymous mountain temples near the capital (see AMBROS 1995, pp. 12-13, 16-20; TAMAMURO 1992).

In contrast, the pilgrimage destinations of male aristocrats were more diverse. They included all of the above as well as Mt. Hiei 比叡山 near the capital, the seven great temples in Nara (Tōdai-ji, Saidai-ji, Daian-ji, Kōfuku-ji, Gangō-ji, Yakushi-ji, and Hōryū-ji), Mitake 御岳 (Kinpusen 金峰山 near Yoshino in the deep mountains of Yamato), Mt. Kōya 高野山 and Kokawa-dera 粉河寺 in Kii. There are several reasons why female aristocrats from the capital did not visit these temples. Some were simply too far away to be reached by female pilgrims while others were sacred mountains and monastic training centers that did not allow women to enter. Especially in the case of sacred mountains, the cult often focused on Pure Land beliefs—e.g., the belief that the mountain top was a concrete manifestation of a Pure Land—and, therefore, women (who were considered to be polluted) were not allowed to enter. However, the pilgrimage destinations of noblewomen usually centered around devotional cults of a particular Buddhist deity.

These are all important aspects that indicate the gendered nature of Heian pilgrimages. However, it is rituals that make up the pilgrimages themselves. Therefore, we must ask: what were the rituals that allowed Heian noblewomen to go on sacred journeys? In this section we shall look at the various factors such as dress, the ritual behavior, the journey, and the economic background that played into a pilgrimage. We shall see that many aspects of the pilgrimage were class and status specific so that it is difficult to assume the existence of a strong feeling of *communitas*, which would require some degree of leveling of class and status through ritual praxis.

### *Pilgrimage Seasons*

If a noblewoman were to make a pilgrimage, she would probably choose spring or autumn to do so. Pilgrimages to temples took place all year round, but in general pilgrims preferred spring and autumn since those were the seasons when the weather was ideal for travel. Furthermore, it allowed the pilgrim to enjoy spectacular views of blossoms or fall foliage on the way. The author of the *Sarashina nikki* writes:

In spring I made a pilgrimage to Kurama. The mountain was beautifully veiled in mist. Some people brought us yam roots from the hills, which delighted us. On our return from the temple the blossoms had all scattered and the countryside had lost its charm; but in the Tenth Month when I went there on a further retreat the scenery was lovelier than ever. The mountainside was a great cloth of brocade, and in the streams the water bubbled like drops of crystal. When I reached the [priests' quarters], I was overcome by the beauty of the maple leaves, which had been besprinkled by an Autumn shower.

(MORRIS 1975, p. 96)<sup>2</sup>

The pilgrims' preferences for spring and autumn were probably based on a general appreciation of those seasons, but it is also possible that it made the temple compound more sacred because the splendor of blossoms or fall foliage made the site appear like a very manifestation of paradise. Pilgrimages to certain temples were thought to be more efficacious in spring or autumn or on special occasions. For example, in the context of Narutaki Hannyaji, which is in the west of Heiankyō, autumn is mentioned as the most beneficial of all seasons for a

<sup>2</sup> I have substituted "priests' quarters" for Morris's translation of *sōbō* 僧坊 as "presbytery," which to my mind conjures up an entirely different meaning.

pilgrimage: “I thought too that I should like to go on a retreat at the same mountain temple.... My people argued that autumn retreats were really more beneficial.... I decided, however, to go away during the Fourth Month” (SEIDENSTICKER 1990, pp. 95–96). Furthermore, Sugawara no Takasue’s daughter mentions that Kiyomizu-dera was bustling with pilgrims during the equinox (*higan* 彼岸; SN p. 62). Similarly, Sei Shōnagon points out that Kiyomizu-dera was known to be particularly busy during the first month (MS 1 p. 278).

### Preparations

Before embarking on her pilgrimage, the pilgrim prepared for the trip by observing a period of abstinence (*sōji[n]* or *shōji[n]* 精進). The pilgrim observed a special retreat in her own residence or a family or household member’s residence during which she kept a special diet (no fish or meat) that would be continued through the entire pilgrimage. The aim of the abstinence was to become ritually pure, a state that also was to be maintained during the stay at the temple. For example, the *Genji monogatari* states that when Ukifune was to go on a pilgrimage to Ishiyama, her attendants held a fast and became ritually pure (*kiyomawaru*; GM, vol. 8, p. 33). As can be inferred from the *Ochikubo monogatari*, *Genji monogatari*, and the *Kagerō nikki*, menstruation was a reason to delay or interrupt one’s stay at a temple because it was a pollution (*kegare* 穢 or *fujō no koto* 不浄のこと; GM, vol. 8, p. 35; KN, pp. 116–17, 119; OM, p. 22). However, it was not a permanent defilement. As soon as it passed, the pilgrim was again ritually pure and allowed to enter the temple ground (KN, p. 122).

The original meaning of the term *shōjin*, a translation of the Buddhist term “*virya*,” indicates another aspect of the practice. It also has the meaning of engaging sincerely in the practice of Buddhism. During the abstinence, the pilgrim set up a sacred space by lighting piles of incense in a censer (*kawarake ni kō uchimorite* 土器に香うち盛りて) and engaging in contemplative devotion to a Buddhist deity (*hotoke o nenjitatematsuru* 仏を念じ奉る) using a rosary (*zuzu* 数珠; KN, pp. 111, 139; ISNISS, p. 19). During the fast the pilgrim paid special attention to her dreams, which were believed to have oracular qualities. Take for example the author of the *Kagerō nikki*, who on a long preparatory fast takes note of two dreams:

On about the twentieth day of the retreat I dreamed that my hair was cut and my forehead bared like a nun. Seven or eight days later I dreamed that a viper was crawling among my entrails and gnawing at my liver, and that the proper remedy

for the difficulty was to pour water over my face. I did not know whether these dreams were good or bad, but I write them down so that those who hear of my fate will know what trust to put in dreams and signs from the Buddha.

(SEIDENSTICKER 1990, p. 98)<sup>3</sup>

Pilgrimage to a temple was thus accompanied by preparatory rituals that marked it off against the routines of daily life.

For female aristocrats, who spent most of their time in their residences anyway, this abstinence entailed the keeping of special rituals. For male aristocrats this preparatory abstinence was more complicated because it required that they refrain from participating in their usual official duties. For the period of abstinence, they did not attend functions at court but remained in seclusion. They also abstained from drinking alcohol (MKK, Chōwa 4/1/2), a pastime that was closely integrated into their official duties and functions. The most rigorous period of abstinence was the one that preceded the pilgrimage to Kinpusen. It was observed exclusively by men, since the mountain was prohibited to women. The period of abstinence lasted about three months, during which the pilgrim observed strict periods of seclusion and various purification rituals in special locations on river banks and at waterfalls. For example, in preparation for pilgrimages to Kinpusen in 1007 and in 1011, Fujiwara no Michinaga observed various purifications including the ritual of “purification in seven places,” which took place over seven days. Michinaga visited the Kamo River, the waterfall at Narutaki, the Mimito River, the Takano River at Matsugasaki, the Ōi River, a southern section of the Kamo River, and the waterfall at the Hannya-ji (Narutaki). It also included divinations performed by Yin-Yang masters regarding the circumstances of the trip (MKK, Kankō 4/5/17–8/2 and Kankō 8/1/13–3/9; HÉRAIL 1988, pp. 172–79, 465–66).

### *The Journey: Transportation and Traveling Attire*

For an aristocratic woman who spent most of her life indoors, a journey would be a tiresome adventure even if it were a trip to a nearby temple. Roads were not entirely safe and her station demanded that she travel in style. Therefore, when an aristocratic woman set out on a pilgrimage, she never traveled entirely by herself but always kept at

<sup>3</sup> Similar evidence is found in the *Genji monogatari*, where an inauspicious dream during the preparatory fast is used as an excuse for not going on a pilgrimage to Ishiyama (GM, vol. 8, p. 33).

least a small retinue of attendants. In the *Genji monogatari*, even Tamakazura's inconspicuous party consists of the following: "Led by the former vice-governor, the party included two bowmen, three or four pages, three women...and a pair of ancient scullery women." At the same time the party of the more prestigious Ukon is said to comprise "two women who seemed to be of considerable standing and a number of attendants, men and women. Four or five of the men were on horseback" (SEIDENSTICKER 1992, p. 416). The pilgrimage parties were often used to display the pilgrim's wealth and high social status. For example, Kaneie's daughter, the imperial consort Senshi, was accompanied by an ostentatious retinue on her pilgrimage to Hasedera:

Before the year was out, the Imperial Lady journeyed to Hasedera with a retinue of senior nobles and other courtiers. The handsome young men were attired in hunting robes, the older gentlemen wore informal costumes. It was a brilliant party — the Regent in his carriage, Senshi in a Chinese carriage, and carriage-loads of nuns preceding the conveyances of the ladies-in-waiting. The entourage included at least ten nuns, of whom some were recent arrivals; others had been with Senshi for years. (McCULLOUGH and McCULLOUGH 1980, p. 165)

Most of the women, however, could not travel in such an exalted fashion. It is more likely that the standard pilgrimage party resembled the one in figure 2, which shows a fragment from the third section of the *Ishiyama-dera engi* depicting a pilgrimage of Sugawara no Takasue's daughter to Ishiyamadera. The main pilgrim is inside the carriage, accompanied by several male attendants in hunting robes (*kariginu* 狩衣) and a female attendant on a horse. But as Sei Shōnagon points out in her *Makura no sōshi*, it was preferable to take along somebody of similar rank in addition to the servants because it would make for a more pleasant, entertaining trip (MS 1, p. 281). Therefore they would often travel with other aristocratic women or a family member. A young girl, especially, would often be accompanied by other members of the household even though she was the principal pilgrim. If married women accompanied their husbands or fathers, they were usually secondary pilgrims.<sup>4</sup>

Depending on the pilgrim's station and how conspicuous the pilgrimage was supposed to be, the journey could be undertaken either

<sup>4</sup> For examples see OM, pp. 21–22, 142–51; KN, pp. 36–37; 139–44, 169, 191–92; MS, pp. 130, 281; GM, pp. 297–309; GM 8, p. 33; SN, pp. 34, 88.





**Figure 2.** *Ishiyama-dera engi emaki*. Osaka Barrier on Sugawara no Takasue no Musume's Pilgrimage to Ishiyama. Illustration taken from *Nihon emaki zenshū*, Vol. 22.



**Figure 3.** *Kokawa-dera engi emaki*. The Daughter of a Wealthy Man from Kawachi Province Sets Out on a Pilgrimage to Kokawa. Illustration taken from *Nihon emaki zenshū*, Vol. 6.

in a carriage or on foot. Occasionally picture scrolls from the Kamakura period depict women making pilgrimages on horseback. For example, figure 2 shows Sugawara no Takasue's daughter's female attendant on a horse. Similarly, figure 3 shows a scene from the *Kokawa-dera engi*, depicting the daughter of a wealthy man from Kawachi Province on a pilgrimage to Kokawa. The girl is dressed up like an aristocratic lady and has mounted a horse. In texts from the mid-Heian period, however, there are no references that Heian court ladies made pilgrimages on horseback. It is also impossible to find depictions of Heian noblewomen on horseback in early picture scrolls, but occasionally one will see a lady in traveling attire on horseback painted on a folding fan (KYŌTO KOKURITSU HAKUBUTSUKAN 1989, p. 97). At any rate, most pilgrimages, even those in the immediate vicinity of the capital, were made by carriage. Pilgrimages on foot were rare and restricted to the vicinity of the capital. Sei Shōnagon's visit to the Inari Shrine on which she met a woman who was determined to climb the mountain seven times that day is one of the few examples (MS 2, p. 31). Another example is a pilgrimage by Fujiwara no Michitsuna's mother to Ishiyama (KN, p. 96). The *Genji monogatari* contains a dramatic description of Tamakazura's and Ukon's arduous pilgrimages to Hase-dera on foot:

The pilgrimage was to be on foot. Though not used to walking, the girl did as she was told. What sort of crimes had she been guilty of, she was asking, that she must be subjected to such trials?... Late on the morning of the fourth day, barely alive, they arrived at Tsubaichi, just below Hatsuse.

Though they had come very slowly, the girl was so footsore when they reached Tsubaichi that they feared she could not go on. Led by the former vice-governor, the party included two bowmen, three or four grooms and pages, three women [in *tsubosōzoku*], and a pair of ancient scullery women.... A second party did just then come up, also on foot, including two women who seemed to be of considerable standing and a number of attendants, men and women. Four or five men were on horseback.... In fact, the principal pilgrim in the second party was that Ukon who had never ceased weeping for the lady of the evening faces.... She was used to travel, but the walk was exhausting even so.

(SEIDENSTICKER 1992, pp. 415–16)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> I have replaced Seidensticker's "heavily veiled" with "in *tsubosōzoku*," which means in "traveling costume" and which is what the Japanese text has.

It is questionable whether it was customary for women to make the Hase-dera pilgrimage on foot. The authors of the *Kagerō nikki* and the *Sarashina nikki* did not hesitate to choose a carriage as a means of transportation on their journeys to Hase-dera. It seems more likely that this scene in the *Genji monogatari* is used for its dramatic effect. Yet in some cases the final ascent to the temple was made on foot, such as in the case of Sei Shōnagon's pilgrimage to Kiyomizu-dera (MS 1, p. 274).<sup>6</sup>

However, it cannot be denied that traveling, especially on foot, was quite an adventure for aristocratic women who did not travel around freely even in the capital but were usually confined to their residences. Edward Seidensticker aptly characterizes the life of the Heian lady as one of darkness and inaction because she was hidden behind shutters, blinds, curtains, fans, and numerous layers of clothing. He writes in his introduction to his translation of the *Kagerō nikki*: "Unless she was a lady in waiting and her duties required her to be more active, she rarely ventured beyond the veranda" (SEIDENSTICKER 1990, pp. 21-22). In these circumstances, the mere fact of traveling was a rupture from everyday life.<sup>7</sup> This is very clear in a passage from the *Genji monogatari* that describes Murasaki's feelings on a pilgrimage to the Sumiyoshi Shrine:

Though Murasaki was of course familiar enough with the music and dance of the several seasons, she rarely left the house and had never before been so far from the city. Everything was new and exciting. (SEIDENSTICKER 1992, p. 631)

Similarly, the author of the *Kagerō nikki* remarks on one of her pilgrimages:

Presently the road turned into the mountains. It was as though we were cleanly shut off from the city, and I felt a strong sense of release, a reaction no doubt from the depression that had been plaguing me so. At the barrier we stopped to rest and feed the animals. Some woodcutters came pulling their carts down from the dark woods above, so new a sight to me that it

<sup>6</sup> Ivan Morris's translation has Hase-dera, which seems to be a corruption in the variant on which he is basing his translation. However, most variants have Kiyomizu-dera, and the text clearly points to Kiyomizu-dera.

<sup>7</sup> Edward SEIDENSTICKER's ironic comment that "Sometimes she went forth on foot, when felt called upon to make a particularly arduous pilgrimage to some nearby temple, and then she was allowed to tuck up her skirts a bit" is entirely unwarranted (1990, p. 22). Ivan MORRIS also misses the point when he writes that in the Heian period "the long journeys to the temples were not primarily religious—unless we accept the worship of nature as a form of religion" (1975, p. 7).

was almost as if I had been reborn into a different world.

I was taut with emotion as we rode down from the barrier. The vista stretched on into the distance, endlessly it seemed. As I stared at what I first took to be a couple of birds, I saw that they were fishing boats on the lake. Dulled though my emotions had become, I was moved to tears by the beauty of the scene, and my companion even more strongly.

(SEIDENSTICKER 1990, p. 83)

Pilgrimage and travel had a sense of novelty as well as feeling of release from one's troubles and an intensification of emotion. It was clearly a diversion from one's daily routine.

On her pilgrimages, especially on one undertaken on foot, a woman of the middle and lower ranks of the aristocracy wore special traveling robes for women (*tsubosōzoku* 壺装束). According to Sei Shōnagon, proper rules of conduct required a woman of good standing to wear *tsubosōzoku* on pilgrimages and when visiting a temple to listen to a sermon (MS 1, p. 83). She writes:

One would imagine that it would be all right for ladies of quality to visit temples and take a discreet look at the preacher's dais. After all, even women of humble station may listen devoutly to religious sermons. Yet in the old days ladies almost never walked to temples to attend sermons; on the rare visits that they did undertake they had to wear elegant travelling costume [*tsubosōzoku*], as when making proper pilgrimages to shrines and temples.

(MORRIS 1967, p. 35)

But what did a *tsubosōzoku* look like? Again picture scrolls from the late Heian period do not show women in *tsubosōzoku*, but frontispieces of the late-Heian copies of Buddhist scriptures and folding fans inscribed with scriptures do. For example, a frontispiece to "The Encouragement of Samantrabhadra" from the late twelfth century shows a scene that might depict what Sei Shōnagon had in mind. Three women in *tsubosōzoku*, and a nun and a courtier holding rosaries are listening to a Buddhist service carried out by three monks (see TANABE 1988, plate 5). Similarly, a folding fan from the twelfth century inscribed with the *Lotus Sutra* shows three women in *tsubosōzoku* (see TANABE 1988, plate 22). From depictions like this, we can reconstruct what a *tsubosōzoku* looked like (see figure 4).<sup>8</sup> It consisted of a large hat (*ichimegasa* 市女笠) and a small-sleeved kimono (*kosode* 小袖) over which she wore a short overcoat (*kouchiki* 小袷) into which

<sup>8</sup> The illustration in the *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, vol. 14, p. 62, is based on the above-mentioned twelfth-century fan. Compare plate 22 in TANABE 1988.

the pilgrim would insert her long hair. She would hitch up her robes around the waist, tie them with a string, and tuck in the hems of the robes in front. Occasionally, she would wear the *uchiki* as a hood pulled over her head like a *kazuki* 被衣 (*Nihon kokugo daijiten* 14, p. 62; MS 1, p. 274; MS 2, p. 31).<sup>9</sup> In addition, a noblewoman on a pilgrimage wore a special type of sash (*kakeobi* 掛帯) made of red silk across her chest and shoulders and tied in a bow in the back. It marked the woman as taboo (*Nihon kokugo daijiten* 4, p. 463).<sup>10</sup> This shoulder sash appears in several frontispieces to the *Heike nōkyō* from 1164 (TANABE 1988, plates 8, 19, 20). Sei Shōnagon also refers to wearing her *obi* during her prayers after she has arrived at Kiyomizu-dera by carriage (MS 1, p. 276).

The robes clearly functioned to hide the lady from strangers' eyes, but they were also a status symbol. When Sei Shōnagon met a woman of low status on her pilgrimage to the Inari Shrine, she found it necessary to point out that the woman was not wearing traveling robes but had just tucked up her kimono (*tsubosōzoku nado ni wa arade, tada hiki-hakoetarū* 壺装束などにはあらで、ただひきはこへたる) (MS 2, p. 31). This means the woman was not wearing an *ichimegasa* or a *kakeobi*. Another indication that the *kakeobi* may have functioned as a status symbol is that in the *Ishiyama-dera engi* lower-class women are often depicted without a *kakeobi*, whereas noblewomen are depicted with it.

In addition to the type of clothing, the quality of the robes of course also marked the status of the pilgrim, whether male or female. Just as in nonpilgrimage contexts, the authors of literary works lavish much attention on describing the apparel of pilgrims. Murasaki Shikibu uses the description of Tamakazura's attendant Sanjō's robes and her physique as a way to indicate how countrified the woman had become: "She had on a somewhat rustic robe of fulled silk and an unlined jacket, and she had put on a great deal of weight"

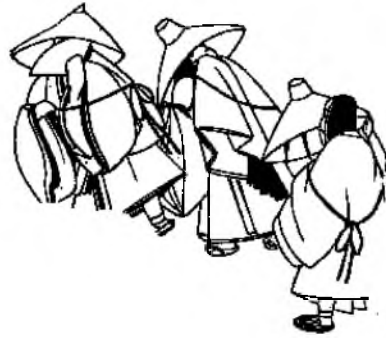


Figure 4. *Tsubosōzoku*  
Illustration taken from *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, Vol. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Ivan MORRIS translates 衣うへごまに引き返しなどしたるものあり as "some who were wearing their clothes inside out," which turns it into an odd custom indeed (1967, pp. 126-27).

<sup>10</sup> In the medieval period aristocratic women also wore a *kakemamori* 懸け守り, an amulet carried around the neck on a string. According to the *NIHON KOKUGO DAIJITEN* (vol. 4, p. 480), the *kakeobi* appears from the Heian period, but I have not come across any references or depictions from this time.

(SEIDENSTICKER 1992, p. 417). Similarly, the vice-governor in Tamakazura's party has become so countrified that Ukon has trouble recognizing the man whom "she had known when he was young, and much less stout and sunburned, and much better dressed" (SEIDENSTICKER 1992, pp. 416–17). In contrast, Tamakazura, who is of higher station than the members of her party, has preserved her elegance. Ukon is impressed by the beautiful figure she cuts in her *tsubosōzoku*: "Ukon saw ahead of her a beautiful and heavily veiled figure. The hair under what would appear to be an early-summer singlet was so rich that it seemed out of place" (SEIDENSTICKER 1992, p. 418). The *Ochikubo monogatari* also displays a fascination with elegant attire worn on the occasion of a pilgrimage. Here we find the case of a woman attendant of one of the daughters of the household whose members are about to go on a pilgrimage to Kiyomizu: "Akogi, as an attendant of the Third Lady, was to go and had had given to her incomparably fine new clothes" (WHITEHOUSE and YANAGISAWA 1965, p. 14). Sei Shōnagon also spends much time commenting on pilgrims' attire. She describes groups of pilgrims decked out in their finery for an outing to a temple so that they could impress people with their elegance on the way, only to be sadly disappointed when they do not meet any admirers (MS 1, p. 222). On a pilgrimage to Kiyomizu she notes the elegant apparel of various pilgrims, both men and women. While some pilgrims had hitched up their robes "others were dressed in formal style with trains on their skirts and Chinese jackets. The sight of so many people shuffling along the corridors in lacquered leather shoes and short clogs was delightful and reminded me of the Palace" (MORRIS 1967, pp. 126–27). It is significant that she draws a parallel with the palace, since that was one of the places where people were required to wear the most formal attire.

#### *The Journey to Hase-dera*

Most temples were located in the immediate vicinity of the capital and would require a journey of only a few hours. To see what traveling conditions to a more distant locale were like, let us examine the journey to Hase-dera, a temple located in Yamato Province about fifty kilometers from the capital, Heian-kyō. The journey to the temple could span a period of one or several days and could entail many physical dangers. A pilgrimage there would include crossing rivers and dangerous mountain passes and making several overnight stops on the way. There were conventionalized rest stops, such as temples, which were quite used to accommodating pilgrims. The *Kagerō nikki* and the

*Sarashina nikki* contain similar descriptions of the route to Hase-dera for the years 968 (*Kagerō*), 971 (*Kagerō*), and 1046 (*Sarashina*). Although the stops en route of the two authors differed slightly, the route of the first Hase-dera pilgrimage in the *Kagerō nikki* and of the pilgrimage in the *Sarashina nikki* were virtually identical. The two women proceeded in a direct line to Hase-dera. However, the second *Kagerō* pilgrimage in Tenroku 2 (971) followed a slightly different route because the author was traveling with her father, Fujiwara no Tomoyasu. This time the pilgrimage party stopped at the Kasuga Shrine to pay homage to the tutelary deities of the Fujiwara family. It can be assumed that this was because, as a Fujiwara, the author's father had a social obligation to do so. This is supported by TSUJI Hidenori's claim that the pilgrimage to the Kasuga Shrine was not a voluntary but an obligatory pilgrimage for members of the Fujiwara family (1979, p. 313). And indeed, both Fujiwara no Yukinari and Fujiwara no Sanesuke on their respective pilgrimages to Hase-dera visited the Kasuga/Kōfuku-ji complex (TSUJI 1979, 135–38). Women, on the other hand, had no such obligation.

Another element that is virtually nonexistent when women made this pilgrimage alone, is highlighted by the fact that Fujiwara no Tomoyasu's party then took a detour to Asuka-dera (Gangō-ji) to offer votive lights.<sup>11</sup> As mentioned above, male aristocrats often visited several temples on the way to their final destination and would take considerable detours to do so. As early as the *Utsuho monogatari* we find a fictional example of a pilgrimage by Fujiwara no Kanemasa, who visits Hase-dera, Ryūmon-ji, Hiso-dera, Takuma-dera, Tsubosaka-dera, and Kinpusen (UM 2, pp. 209–10). Similarly, in the *Sagoromo monogatari* from the late eleventh century Sagoromo plans to visit Kokawa-dera on his way to Mt. Kōya (SM 1, pp. 244–56). But there is also historical evidence. In 990 Fujiwara no Sanesuke spent one extra night at Daian-ji in order to be able to visit Gangō-ji and the Kasuga Shrine during the day. Tsuji Hidenori takes Sanesuke's excursion on the way as evidence of a development toward the custom of making a pilgrimage to several temples (*junrei* 巡礼) (TSUJI 1979, pp. 136, 138).

Two considerable dangers on the journey to Hase-dera were uncertain lodgings and the possibility of being attacked by robbers in the mountains. In contrast to later times, say the Tokugawa period (1600–1868), commercial lodgings were very limited or nonexistent, but aristocrats could rely on the hospitality of temples, the local gentry,

<sup>11</sup> Asuka-dera probably refers to Gangō-ji in Nara and not to Asuka-dera several miles south of Nara. Asuka-dera moved to Nara in the early Heian period and was officially called Gangō-ji.



or commoners. If they were wealthy enough, they could of course also depend on their own estates (*shōen*) for accommodation and supplies. Unlike lower-class people, aristocrats usually did not have to make do with makeshift accommodations, but could be sure to find a place to stay for the night (SHINJŌ 1982, pp. 23–25, 28–29; BRESLER 1975, pp. 48–50). The author of the *Kagerō nikki* writes:

We spent the night at Hashidera. It was about six in the evening when we arrived, and a salad of chopped radish with some kind of sauce was brought out from what appeared to be the kitchen. Everything intensified the exciting awareness of being on the road. Even trivialities like this seemed quite unforgettable. (SEIDENSTICKER 1990, p. 66)

The journey imparted to the traveler little used to journeying a sense of novelty. It could also lead to rather unusual encounters. *Sarashina nikki* contains a rather comical scene in which the author has taken lodgings with some country folk who are suspicious of the party:

The men went off in different directions to look for some place to spend the night. “It’s hard to find anything suitable in these parts,” said one of them when he returned. “All I’ve seen is a simple peasant’s cottage.”

“Well, it can’t be helped,” I said. “We’ll have to stay there.”

There was no one in the cottage except two rough fellows who explained that their masters had gone to the Capital. These men did not sleep a wink all night, but kept walking about inside and outside the house. “What are you men doing?” asked one of [their wives]. The men, who obviously thought I was asleep and would not hear them, replied “Good heavens! We can’t possibly go to sleep. Here we are putting up people we know nothing about. What would happen to us if they made off with the cauldron? That’s why we’re walking about like this.” (MORRIS 1975, pp. 93–94)<sup>12</sup>

Certainly aristocrats received favors (perhaps forced favors) from local residents that ordinary pilgrims would not be able to expect. But even then things would not always proceed smoothly. Occasionally a pilgrimage party could end up in a precarious situation. For example, on the same pilgrimage cited above the author of the *Sarashina nikki* has to discover with horror that they have taken lodging in a thief’s house:

<sup>12</sup> I have substituted “their wives” for Morris’s “my women.” The text has 奥の方なる女ども, which probably refers to a woman or women belonging to the household rather than someone in the *Sarashina* party (SN, p. 63).

We left Hase Temple before dawn. On our way back to the Capital we could not find any proper lodging for the night and were obliged to stay on the far side of Nara Slope in another simple little cottage. "There's something strange about this place," one of my people warned me. "Don't fall asleep whatever you do! If anything unusual happens, just stay quiet and pretend you have heard nothing! Try to breathe as softly as possible!" I was terrified, and the night seemed longer than a thousand years. When dawn finally came, I was told that the place was a thieves' den and that the mistress of the house had been up to something suspicious during the night.

(MORRIS 1975, pp. 105-107)

A pilgrimage to Hase-dera thus could have elements of an arduous and uncertain adventure despite the fact that the actual distance traveled from the capital to the destination would usually not exceed fifty kilometers.

Travel was so unpleasant that there existed a practice of dispatching someone to make the pilgrimage in one's stead (*daisan* 代参).<sup>13</sup> The mother of the author of *Sarashina nikki*, for example, was afraid of bandits on the road and refused to let her daughter make a pilgrimage to Hase-dera. Ishiyama was out of the question because it lay beyond Osaka Barrier and Kurama was too deep in the mountains. This left only nearby Kiyomizu-dera as an option. In addition to the pilgrimage to Kiyomizu, the mother had a one-foot mirror made and sent a priest off to Hase-dera to deliver the mirror and to go on a three-day retreat in place of the daughter, during which he was supposed to pray for a dream concerning the girl's future. In the meantime the girl had to observe an abstinence at home (*shōjin*) for the duration of the priest's pilgrimage (SN, pp. 62-65).<sup>14</sup> A similar practice was observed by Fujiwara no Michinaga, on whose property a dog gave birth during Michinaga's preparatory abstinence for a planned pilgrimage to Kinpusen in 1011. Because of the severe defilement, he sent a messenger to Kinpusen and maintained his abstinence until the messenger returned (MKK, Kankō 8/3/2-9; SYK, Kankō 8/3/7-8; HÉRAIL 1988, pp. 467-68).

<sup>13</sup> *Daisan* is a modern term. The text has: え率で参らぬかはりにとて、僧を出だしたてて初瀬に詣でさすめり (SN, p. 92).

<sup>14</sup> According to HAYAMI Tasuku (1970, pp. 233-34) and SHINJŌ Tsunezō (1982, pp. 5-6), this practice was not limited only to women's pilgrimages.

*At the Temple*

Once she reached the temple, the pilgrim usually planned to spend several days or at least one night in retreat. This type of practice was called *komori* 籠り (retreat, seclusion). In essence the retreat at the temple was very similar to the preparatory abstinence at home (*shōjin*). When the pilgrim reached her final destination, she marked her entry into the sacred space by performing further purifications in the form of ablutions in a purification hall (*yuya* 齋屋 or also *haraedono* 祓殿) or in her private enclosure (SN, pp. 88, 93; KN, pp. 98–99, 142; MS 1, p. 276). Notions of purity on the temple grounds were important, so that women who began menstruating while on a retreat had to remove themselves from the precincts of the temple (KN, pp. 119–20). It is not clear whether childbirth was also considered a pollution at all temples. The *Eiga monogatari* mentions that the monks at Kōryū-ji are inconvenienced and feel that they will have to apologize to the deity when the imperial consort Genshi is to give birth at their temple, but in the *Yoru no nezame* the pregnant Nezame is moved to Ishiyama-dera to ensure her safe delivery (EM 1, pp. 335–37; YN 1, pp. 101–103).

Once a pilgrim of high status entered the temple she was immediately assigned a private enclosure (*tsubone* 局)<sup>15</sup> in the main hall where she would spend the nights of her retreat. Sei Shōnagon gives us a description of how the monks quickly set up an enclosure with blinds (*sudare* 簾), heavy folding screens (*onibyōbu* 鬼屏風), and mats (*tatami* 畳) as a party planning to spend the night arrives at Kiyomizu at nightfall (MS 1, p. 278).<sup>16</sup> Figure 5, an illustration from the fourth section of the *Ishiyama-dera engi*, shows Murasaki Shikibu in her enclosure at the temple. She is wearing a bright red sash (*kakeobi*).

As follows from the *Makura no sōshi*, *Ochikubo monogatari*, *Genji monogatari*, and *Yoru no nezame*, the assignment of enclosures was highly influenced by one's social standing. A party of higher social rank was given clear priority. For example, in the *Makura no sōshi* servants were not given an enclosure but housed in an entirely different place, namely the monks' quarters (*shi no bō* 師の坊; MS 1, p. 277; OM, pp. 145–46; GM 3, p. 303). In the *Genji monogatari*, during Lady Tamakazura's and Ukon's pilgrimage to Hase-dera, Ukon, who belongs to Genji's household, is given a privileged space to the right of the Buddha. By contrast, Lady Tamakazura, who has just arrived from the

<sup>15</sup> The term "*tsubone*" is of course also used in a nonreligious, domestic context. For example, enclosures at the palace are also called *tsubone*.

<sup>16</sup> We find mention of *tsubone* even in such early tales as the *Yamato monogatari* (p. 125) and *Heichū monogatari* (pp. 13–14, 37).



**Figure 5.** *Ishiyama-dera engi emaki*. Murasaki Shikibu in Her Enclosure at Ishiyama-dera Where She Is Said to Have Written the First Chapter of the *Genji Monogatari*. Illustration taken from *Nihon emaki zenshū*, Vol. 22.

provinces, is assigned a less prestigious spot (GM 3, p. 303). Pilgrims probably did not spend the entire retreat in their enclosure if they stayed for more than one night. Fujiwara no Sanesuke spent three nights at Hase-dera on his pilgrimage in 990. During his retreat he alternated between praying in the main hall and staying in his room. According to TSUJI Hidenori this was a customary procedure (1979, pp. 137, 141). The *Genji monogatari* provides evidence that female pilgrims may have done the same. During their stay at Hase-dera Ukon, Tamakazura, and Tamakazura's female attendants retire to a monk's room (*bō* 坊) in the morning after having spent their night in their enclosure in the main hall. In the evening they return to their *tsubone* (GM 3, pp. 303–309). The *Kagerō nikki* indicates a similar practice during the author's pilgrimage to Ishiyama (KN pp. 99–100).

If she was fortunate, the pilgrim could see the image in the main hall on the way to her enclosure and witness the priests bringing lamp offerings (*miakashi* 御燈明) to be burnt before the image of worship. A barrier (*inufusegi* 犬防, dog barrier)<sup>17</sup> kept anyone but the priests from approaching the main image too closely, but it allowed a glimpse of the main image. The priests of the temple would enter the sanctuary, kneel on the platform of worship, and recite petitions and sutras in the pilgrim's stead. Even when she was in her enclosure the pilgrim could hear petitions and sutras being recited. Hearing the sound of temple bells ringing and conches being blown was also part of a proper retreat. The pilgrims were also aware of what went on in the other enclosures around them because the curtains and blinds did not prevent sound from traveling (MS 1, pp. 275–76). But in general, direct contact with other pilgrims was limited and often unwanted. Sei Shōnagon even complained about having to pass by pilgrims (perhaps they were lower-class pilgrims) lined up in front of her enclosure (MS 1, p. 275).

Pilgrims would often spend three to seven days in retreat at the temple. Three days appears to be the most common length of a visit. During their stay women could worship by burning incense, praying, and reciting scriptures in their enclosures, and they would often refrain from sleeping at night (KN, pp. 100, 119; MS 1, pp. 275–81). On the one hand this was partly because of the constant noise at the temple, which continued all night through and prevented the pilgrim

<sup>17</sup> McCULLOUGH and McCULLOUGH (1980, p. 564) explain the etymology of *inufusegi* (dog barrier) as follows:

*Inufusegi*, a low, latticed barrier separating the sanctuary from the outer portion of a Buddhist hall; so called from earlier barricades erected to keep dogs off the stairs of buildings.

from getting a good night's sleep. On the other hand it was also used to induce divinely inspired dreams should the pilgrim drift into sleep from exhaustion. Just as during the preparatory abstinence, dreams at the temple were believed to have oracular qualities. The *Sarashina nikki* is full of accounts of dreams the author experiences during her temple visits. The author of the *Kagerō nikki* also experiences dreams, such as this one at Ishiyamadera:

Toward dawn I dozed off and dreamed that a priest, the manager of the temple's affairs, it appeared, came up with a pitcher of water and poured it on my right knee. I awoke with a start. It must have been a sign from the Buddha, an unhappy one, no doubt.  
(SEIDENSTICKER 1990, p. 90)

Several centuries later these dreams in the *Kagerō nikki* and the *Sarashina nikki* had become so famous that they were depicted in the *Ishiyama-dera engi*. The dream quoted above is illustrated in the second section of the *Ishiyama-dera engi* (see figure 6). Notice again the *kakeobi* worn by the women in the enclosure. The attendants are resting on the veranda.

Since the temples provided food and lodging for the pilgrims and the temple priests carried out prayers and recitations, it is to be expected that the temples were adequately compensated for their efforts. Unfortunately, very few sources tell us what female pilgrims paid for their visits at temples. The *Yamato monogatari* (completed around 950) claims that around the year 860 Yoshimine no Munesada's wife, who made a pilgrimage to Hase-dera to pray for the return of her husband, who had become a monk, presented her husband's robes, sash, and long sword as offerings for sutra recitation (YM, pp. 125-26). However, sources recorded by the female pilgrims them-



**Figure 6.** *Ishiyama-dera engi emaki.*  
Dream Sequence from the *Kagerō nikki.*  
Illustration taken from *Nihon emaki zenshū*, Vol. 22.

selves never mention what the exact nature of their offerings was. Perhaps their servants took care of the payment so that they were often unaware of the costs of their stay. It is not that they did not take any interest in these matters. For example, Sei Shōnagon mentions that a messenger sent to ask that prayers be carried out for the safe delivery of a high-ranking lady hands the priest the appropriate offerings for the recitation of scriptures together with his message; she also mentions 1,000 lights being offered before the Buddhist image for another pilgrim (MS 1, p. 277). Similarly Fujiwara no Michitsuna's mother records that a retinue sent from her husband to the Narutaki Hannya-ji, where she was on retreat, promptly presented the priests with cloth (*nuno* 布) and robes (*katabira* 帷子) upon their arrival (KN, p. 123).

As Shinjō Tsunezō points out, offerings made by male courtiers on their pilgrimages were often enormous. They would include bushels of rice, cloth, robes, lamp oil, and even large fiefs. For example, Fujiwara no Yukinari made a pilgrimage to Ishiyama in Kankō 8 (1011). On this occasion he made an offering of 30 bolts of Shinano cloth for sutra recitation, 30,000 lamps, an offering of three bolts of cloth for monks who had made pledges, and an allowance of ten bushels of rice for ordinary monks. Yukinari was by no means one of the highest ranking aristocrats. Courtiers such as the powerful Fujiwara no Michinaga and his son Yorimichi donated enormous fiefs on their pilgrimages to Kinpusen and Mt. Kōya (SHINJŌ 1982, p. 13). According to the *Eiga monogatari* Fujiwara no Kaneie's daughter, i.e., Michinaga's sister, Senshi (961–1001), on her pilgrimage to Hase-dera in 991, reportedly “presented magnificent offerings to the sacred image, conferred largess on the monks, and took her leave” (McCULLOUGH and McCULLOUGH 1980, p. 165). On her pilgrimage to Ishiyama in 1000 she “presented damask curtains and silver bowls as offerings, gave vestments to the abbot, and all the others, held a feast for the monks, added to the temple's lands, commissioned sutra-recitations of every description, and arranged for a myriad-light service [=an offering of 10,000 lights]” (McCULLOUGH and McCULLOUGH 1980, p. 239). With its obvious agenda to glorify the Fujiwara family, the *Eiga monogatari* perhaps exaggerates the quantity of Senshi's offerings, but still they were certainly quite substantial. It seems unlikely, however, that women with less influential backgrounds were able to make such large offerings as the ones made by Michinaga, Yorimichi, and Senshi, but exactly how much they donated is unclear.

### The Trip Home

The trip home was clearly different from the trip to the temple. The texts distinguish between going to the temple (*mōzu* 詣づ) and returning home (*kaeru* 帰る) (KN, p. 64). The pilgrim would break her fast sometime on the way home, a practice referred to as *toshimi* 落忌 (a shortened form of *otoshi-imi*; throw down 落, leave behind + taboo 忌; *Nihon kokugo daijiten* 14, p. 646; KN, pp. 67, 142; OM, p. 41). The author of the *Kagerō nikki* claims that in the case of a Hase-dera pilgrimage this usually took place at the market town of Tsubaichi near Hase-dera, but on her own two pilgrimages we witness the author break her fast later on the trip home. The trip home was also accompanied by much merry-making and feasts provided by the local gentry, during which the attendants in particular would often become intoxicated. These invitations to other nobles' homes could delay the journey considerably. The author of the *Kagerō nikki* notes on one of her return trips from Hase-dera that her party was served pheasant, fish, bass, carp, and alcohol at the Uji residence of Kaneie's uncle Morouji. This luxurious fare was in stark contrast to the vegetarian regime kept on the pilgrimage (KN, pp. 65-68). On her second trip to Hase-dera she records:

One usually changes from pilgrim's fare at Tsubaichi, but I felt that I should like to keep the fast for a while yet. From Tsubaichi on, however, there were invitations which we could not refuse and which delayed our passage. As we handed out gifts the local gentry seemed to exhaust their ingenuity in entertaining us. (SEIDENSTICKER 1990, p. 116)

On the same return trip the party also makes sure to bring gifts for those who have remained in the capital. They decide to take home as a souvenir some trout that they witnessed being caught at Uji (KN, p. 143). On either occasion there is no indication that the merrymaking or indulging in meat or fish or watching cormorant fishing and taking fish as a gift might somehow be at odds with the purpose of the pilgrimage. The *Ochikubo monogatari* suggests that people also may have celebrated their return from a pilgrimage with a great feast at home. An attendant remarks that when the household returns from the pilgrimage to Ishiyama, "they will be wanting a great feast to celebrate the end of their period of abstinence [*toshimi*]" (WHITEHOUSE and YANAGISAWA 1965, p. 32). Obviously, feasting and the exchange of gifts was an integral part of the pilgrimage. We notice here that even in the context of the earliest manifestations of pilgrimage in Japan ludic aspects were not seen as a contradiction of religious endeavor but rather were part of the ritual of pilgrimage.



*Communitas*

Contrary to Victor Turner's assertion that pilgrimage inspires *communitas* (TURNER and TURNER 1978, 252–55), there is little evidence that Heian women pilgrims experienced pilgrimage as a communal event. On the contrary, ritual practices that accompanied the pilgrimage reinforced class and status differences. Aristocrats had a clear advantage over common people as far as transportation, accommodation, and preferential treatment at the temple were concerned. There was little opportunity to come in direct contact with lower-class people, let alone engage in communal worship with them. There is evidence that on those occasions when contact did take place it is not perceived as pleasant. Fujiwara no Michitsuna's mother, for example, expresses her pity for the beggars at Hase-dera but feels unpleasantly surprised by the plebeian setting (KN, p. 65). Sei Shōnagon's feelings are even stronger:

It is very annoying, when one has visited Hase Temple and has retired into one's enclosure, to be disturbed by a herd of common people who come and sit outside in a row, crowded so close together that the tails of their robes fall over each other in utter disarray.... Having made my way up the log steps, deafened by the fearful roar of the river, I hurried into my enclosure, longing to gaze upon the sacred countenance of Buddha. To my dismay I found that a throng of commoners had settled themselves directly in front of me, where they were incessantly standing up, prostrating themselves, and squatting down again. They looked like so many basket-worms as they crowded together in their hideous clothes, leaving hardly an inch of space between themselves and me. I really felt like pushing them all over sideways.

Important visitors always have attendants to clear such pests from their enclosures; but it is not so easy for ordinary people like me. If one summons one of the priests who is responsible for looking after the pilgrims, he simply says something like "You there, move back a little, won't you?" and, as soon as he has left, things are as bad as before. (MORRIS 1967, p. 258)

Instead she finds it preferable to travel with friends:

Whenever I go to stay at a temple, or indeed in any new place, it seems pointless to be accompanied only by one's servants. One needs a few companions of one's own class with whom one can chat congenially. There may be some suitable women even among one's maids; the trouble is that one knows all too

well what they are going to say. Gentlemen appear to have the same idea; for I notice that whenever they go on a pilgrimage they take along a few agreeable companions.

(MORRIS 1967, p. 130)

Therefore, even though different classes worshiped in the same place, a fact that is unusual enough for Heian days, their contact with each other did not exceed mere physical proximity. If anything, pilgrimages were often used to display one's power and elevated position. There were many who, in the words of the *Eiga monogatari*, "on private excursions to shrines and temples, had always tried...to impress people by surrounding themselves with beves of young women, putting on an air of importance, ordering their servants to clear other travelers out of the way, and sauntering along with haughty expressions on their faces" (McCULLOUGH and McCULLOUGH 1980, p. 269).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that pilgrimages opened up a fluid space of possibilities. Aristocratic court nobles were forced to worship next to commoners, with whom they would normally have little contact. Aristocrats of lower rank had a chance to come into contact with aristocrats of higher rank. The crumbling of social boundaries is expressed in the *Genji monogatari* by the fact that Ukon invites Lady Tamakazura's party over to share her privileged spot to the right of the Buddha with them (GM 3, pp. 302-303). It is true, however, that companionship was only extended to pilgrims of approximately the same social standing. In the case of Tamakazura, for example, Ukon extended her hospitality to the women in the party from Hizen in order to spare them any humiliation from lowly country folk. It is obvious that there were clear distinctions between class and gender. Most fundamentally one might point out that *communitas* was hardly the underlying experience of a pilgrimage. Liminal experience was a factor but consisted of the travel itself, which for women who hardly left their residences was a highly unusual experience. This is made particularly clear by the author of the *Kagerō nikki*. Strangely moved by the novel sights along the way, she writes: "It was perhaps because I was traveling alone that I was so taken with everything along the way" (SEIDENSTICKER 1990, p. 66).

That *communitas* was hardly the central experience of court nobles on pilgrimages becomes clear if we contrast our findings to Ennin's (794-864) experience at Wu-t'ai Shan, one of the major pilgrimage centers in China. Ennin traveled to the mountain where Mañjuśrī is revered in 840 on his pilgrimage around China in search of sacred places and the Buddhist law. He observed:

Those who enter these mountains naturally develop a spirit of

equality. When maigre feasts are arranged in these mountains, whether one be cleric or layman, man or woman, great or small, food is offered to all equally. Regardless of rank or position, here all persons make one think of Monju.

(REISCHAUER 1955, pp. 257–58)

He proceeds to recount a story of a wealthy patron who was unwilling to provide equally for all pilgrims and refused to give a pregnant woman both her share and a portion for her unborn child. The woman then revealed herself to be Mañjuśrī and disappeared, to everybody's chagrin (REISCHAUER 1955, pp. 258–59). Ennin concludes:

Thenceforth, when offerings were sent and maigre feasts arranged, all were provided for equally, regardless of whether they were clerics or laymen, men or women, great or small, noble or lowly, poor or rich. Accordingly, the custom of the mountain is to have a system of equality.... At present at maigre-feast gatherings they have in the dining hall a row of men, a row of women, some of them holding babies who also receive a portion, a row of children, a row of novices, a row full of monks, and a row of nuns, and all receive their offering [of food] on their benches. The patron gives out the food equally. When people demand more than their share, they do not blame them but give them all [they ask for], whatever it may be.

(REISCHAUER 1955, p. 259)

In contrast to pilgrimages of noblewomen in mid-Heian Japan, pilgrims at Wu-t'ai Shan in Ennin's time partook of a communal ritual—a meagre feast—which was based on the equality of all pilgrims. However, in Heian Japan there was no such practice. As we have seen, pilgrims usually kept to themselves in their private enclosures and had little direct contact with other pilgrims. This does not mean that wealthy pilgrims did not arrange for meagre feasts in Japan; however, there is no evidence that these banquets included all pilgrims who happened to be at the temple. The texts usually state that they were restricted to the clergy.

It is important to notice pilgrimage was not only about suffering. It included many ludic elements on the way home that balanced the elements of abstinence on the way to the temple. In addition, it cannot be denied that the pilgrimages often showed a close resemblance to sight-seeing, and in the case of wealthy pilgrims there were obvious components to show off one's status. Just recall the *Eiga monogatari's* elaborate description of Senshi's magnificent retinue or her plentiful offerings to the temples. It is not without accident that Sei Shōnagon remarked, with her usual wit,

Planning to go sight-seeing or visit a temple, some gentlemen and ladies [or Buddhist priests] of more or less equal rank have set out together from the Palace where they are in attendance. Though they have made no elaborate preparations, their sleeves hang out of the carriage in the most attractive array, and altogether they are [an extravagant] looking company. They had expected to meet people on their way—gentlemen on horseback or people in other carriages. Alas, no one comes along to admire them. Even if they were to be seen by commoners (who, fascinated by their elegance, might tell other people about them), it would be better than nothing.

(MORRIS 1967, p. 104)<sup>18</sup>

Despite the presence of a strong ascetic tradition of pilgrimage in Japan, it is clear then that even in premodern times there were people who had the wealth and leisure to make a pilgrimage a pleasant excursion.

#### *The Benefits of Pilgrimage*

Yet what was it that compelled female pilgrims to go through the trouble of making a pilgrimage? In the mid-Heian period both male and female aristocrats visited temples to attend special rituals. Sei Shōnagon, for example, has several descriptions of rituals such as the Eight Lessons (*hako* 鳴講), which were attended by large numbers of aristocrats (MS 1, pp. 79–92). The Eight Lessons was an extremely popular ritual among aristocrats, but other rituals were also able to draw large crowds. In the *Utsuho monogatari*, for example, Lady Saishō, Nakatada, and many other people attend the eye-opening ceremony for a statue at Ishizukuri temple (UM 5, pp. 129–30). Since the focus was on the performance of a special ritual, the miracle efficacy of the site was not an issue, so that such rituals were even held in aristocratic residences. When the temple visit was to procure a miracle, however, there was a clear preference for renowned sites with miracle efficacy, that is, miracle temples.

What then were the miracles that aristocrats sought from miracle temples? Upon surveying the texts from the Heian period, we can establish four broad categories: bestowal of wealth and success, granting the desired birth of a child, cure of illness, and gaining salvation.

<sup>18</sup> I have made two emendations: Morris's version omits "Buddhist priests" and I have also chosen to replace "extravagant" for Morris's "pleasant" because it is closer to the sense of the Japanese (see MS 1, p. 222).

While these motivations applied to both male and female pilgrims, a closer look at noblewomen's motivation for visiting a temple reveals the obviously gendered nature of their pilgrimages, because their motivations followed women's life cycles.

#### BESTOWAL OF WEALTH AND SUCCESS

Wealth and success are broad terms that can apply to both male and female, rich and poor. The *Konjaku monogatari* contains several legends about poor women whose faith in the Kiyomizu Kannon was rewarded financially, a reward that is not necessarily tied to their gender (KM 2, pp. 216–21, 302–307, 313–17). In the case of noblewomen, however, wealth and success were closely tied to the gendered notion of success through marriage. It hardly needs to be pointed out that aristocratic women did not have exactly the same needs, because they already had a considerable amount of material wealth. One of their main concerns was to have a successful social career. In the case of young girls, the most recurrent motif is that of young women who lack the necessary support but hope to gain success at court and enter a promising marriage by being taken to a temple by their parents or guardians. Young women and their guardians may have been motivated by promising stories of bountiful rewards for faithful worshippers of Kannon, such as “On an Orphaned Girl Whose Devotion to the Bronze Kannon Brought Her Immediate Reward in a Miraculous Event” from the *Nihon ryōiki*. This story relates how a young woman who has lost her parents and all her fortune is able to find a wealthy husband and regain her fortune with the help of Kannon (NAKAMURA 1973, pp. 207–208). In the *Genji monogatari*, the stories of Lady Tamakazura and Ukifune, who go on pilgrimages to Hase-dera, are similar to this story in the *Nihon ryōiki*. Tamakazura has grown up in Hizen Province outside the capital and does not have any influential patrons. She is sent to Hase-dera before entering the social world of the capital. In the case of Lady Tamakazura the motivations for her pilgrimage are explicitly stated:

“And then,” said the vice-governor, “there is Hatsuse. It is known even in China as the Japanese temple among them all that gets things done. It can't help doing something for a poor lady back after all those years so far away.” And at this time he sent her to Hatsuse. (SEIDENSTICKER 1992, p. 415)

Pilgrimage to a mountain temple could facilitate one's entry into the society. Lady Tamakazura meets her mother's former attendant Ukon on her pilgrimage and thus establishes connections with Genji's powerful household. Ukifune also goes on a pilgrimage to Hase-dera and

promptly meets her future lover Kaoru on her return. The mountain temple was thus perceived as an arena where the outside and the inside could meet.

This motif is not found only in fiction. In the *Kagerō nikki* the author adopts Kaneie's daughter, who has been growing up at a mountain temple on the foot of Mt. Shiga. In order to further the girl's integration, the author embarks on a number of pilgrimages with the girl. In her younger years Sugawara no Takasue no Musume is taken on various pilgrimages by her mother, who even sends a priest to Hase-dera as a proxy in order to procure an auspicious dream about the girl's future. One might add that as a young girl Sugawara no Takasue no Musume herself is less interested in her future success than her parents are but keeps praying that she may obtain copies of various literary tales. Since a girl's success in life was determined by whether she was going to be able to have a successful career at court or be able to enter a marriage with a promising husband, it is only natural that this should be a main concern for parents.

On a more general note one might point out how mountain temples often function as a romantic setting. Most of the texts used for this study are romances that deal with the amorous trials and tribulations of a hero or a heroine. Because this is the mode the works are conceived in, pilgrimages in these works are also colored by romance. From early works such as the *Heichū monogatari* and the *Yamato monogatari* to late works such as the *Yoru no nezame* we find, as Kenneth L. RICHARD translates so aptly in his study of the *Yoru no nezame*, the motif of "the standard boy meets girl while on a pilgrimage" (1973, p. 73). This theme is also echoed in the motif of a young beautiful girl who is discovered at a mountain temple and thus makes her way into influential circles in the capital. The *Genji monogatari* has several such cases, for example Murasaki, who lives in a mountain temple in the northern hills. In the *Kagerō nikki* the author adopts Kaneie's daughter, who has been growing up at a mountain temple on the foot of Mt. Shiga. Because of its liminal setting, the mountain temple, where a woman was more exposed to public view than in her often well-guarded residences, allows for tales of how a courtier is struck spontaneously by her unexpected beauty. In addition, a woman was more alluring to the male courtier because she was placed in a setting of purity away from the mundane world of the capital. Given this motif as a starting point, it can be put to use in various ways, whether as straightforward as in the *Yamato monogatari* and the *Heichū monogatari*, or as intended denial of romance and fortune, such as in the *Ochikubo monogatari* when the evil stepmother forbids her young marriageable stepdaughter to join

them on a pilgrimage to Ishiyama-dera, or as a lover's abduction at Kiyomizu-dera in the *Hamamatsu Chūnagon monogatari* (OM, pp. 21–22; ROHLICH 1983, pp. 207–10). In the *Kagerō nikki*, a work conceived in part as a realistic antiromance, we find the motif of an antiromantic pilgrimage occasioned by marital discord.

In that era it was considered only natural that wives should seek divine assistance should the stability of their marriage be in question because of the husband's neglect. Married noblewomen chose to go on pilgrimages to find consolation if their husbands neglected them and to force their husbands to renew his interest in them. It is important to note at this place the different forms of marital arrangements in the Heian period. As William McCullough has shown, three forms of marriage were practiced in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries: duolocal, uxorilocal, and neolocal marriages. Of these three, duolocal and uxorilocal marriages were the most common in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Neolocal marriages, in which the couple moved into a new residence, gained more prominence toward the end of the twelfth century. Uxorilocal marriage, in which the husband moved into his wife's residence, was common practice in the case of the principal wife, but it could be preceded by a period of duolocal marriage, in which the husband paid his wife visits but remained at his parents' residence. Uxorilocal marriage could further be followed by neolocal marriage arrangements, in which either the wife's parents or the husband would provide an independent residence for the couple. In the case of secondary wives, duolocal marriage was the rule. Neolocal marriage, in which principal and secondary wives lived in the same household, was extremely rare. The establishment provided by Genji for his various wives does not reflect common practice. In a duolocal marriage the wife was entirely dependent on the husband's initiative to come and visit. Divorce was easy because it was equivalent to the simple discontinuance of visits or correspondence and no change of residence was necessary. This form of marriage was thus the least stable of the existing forms of marriage and had the highest divorce rate (MCCULLOUGH 1967, pp. 105–18).

Sugawara no Takasue no Musume is an example of a primary wife who goes on a pilgrimage to Kōryū-ji because her marriage is not happy. However, marital problems and even marriage itself do not play a central role in her diary, whereas they do in the diaries of secondary wives (SN, p. 100). Many wives engaged in pilgrimage to remedy the situation. Secondary wives in particular appear to have made pilgrimages to attract their husband's attention. This is probably because the position of a secondary wife was far more insecure. She

was of a lower status than the principal wife and had less leverage because of the duolocal marriage arrangement.<sup>19</sup> As early as the *Utsuho monogatari* we find an episode that points in this direction. The widow of Minamoto no Tadatsune has an affair with Tachibana no Chikage, but soon after it has started Chikage begins to lose interest in her:

His infrequent visits to her residence gave no comfort to his lonely mind, while it made her crazy about him. Having known that his visit was not necessarily a manifestation of his affection to her, she prayed fervently to the shrines and temples lest her connection with him should be severed.... He always regretted calling on her, and his feelings for her cooled down in the course of time, his connection with her being, however, not entirely severed. Might it have been because her fervent prayer had been answered? (URAKI 1984, pp. 46-47)

In this case, the woman did not go on a pilgrimage herself but commissioned prayers to be carried out in her stead; however, this episode tells of a secondary wife whose prayers to temples and shrines preserve her shaky relationship with a husband who has lost interest in her. There are more direct examples of how a pilgrimage can affect an unstable relationship. The ideal case would be that of Lady Saishō in the *Utsuho monogatari*, who, after being neglected by her husband Fujiwara no Kanemasa, is rediscovered by his son Nakatada at the Yakushi temple Ishizukuri. Nakatada pleads the lady's case with his father, who promptly takes her into his residence. Her son by Kanemasa, who was equally neglected, is recognized by Kanemasa and raised by both him and Nakatada (UM 5, pp. 129ff.).

But circumstances in real life were not always as rosy as in this fictional tale. The main character of the *Izumi Shikibu nikki* (ca. 1010) goes on a pilgrimage when her new husband, whose secondary wife she has recently become, begins to neglect her:

Two or three days later he stole out to see her again. But as it happened, the lady had decided to go on a retreat to a certain temple, and was in the midst of her preparatory purification. And besides, his neglect showed how little interest he had in her anyway. She therefore made scant effort to talk to him,

19 "Omowanu kata ni tomari suru shōshō" in the *Tsutsumi Chūnagon monogatari* suggests that the older sister, an orphan without support, might have been caused to go on a pilgrimage to Kōryū-ji by the neglect of her husband, to whom she is married in a duolocal marriage. In any case, she goes to Kōryū-ji after warning her younger sister not to enter a marriage as a secondary wife (BACKUS 1985, pp. 139-41).



using her religious observances as an excuse for ignoring him all night. (CRANSTON 1969, p. 137)

Later in their marriage, when his interest in her begins to decline again, she makes another pilgrimage:

In the meantime the eighth month had begun. The lady decided she must do something to relieve the tedium of her existence, and set off on a pilgrimage to Ishiyama, leaving word that she would be gone for about seven days. Just at this time the Prince was struck by what a long time had gone by without their seeing each other, and he summoned a page to carry a message. (CRANSTON 1969, p. 153)

By coincidence the Prince who had ignored her for some time becomes interested in her just as she has set off on a pilgrimage to Ishiyama. He sends a messenger after her. When the boy reaches her at the temple the text states that

She felt pleased that he should thus have gone to the trouble of writing her (though when she was close at hand he treated her with indifference). (CRANSTON 1969, p. 154)

If a woman could push her husband into asserting his renewed interest by going away on a pilgrimage, it allowed her to manipulate the relationship. Not only could she find diversion from her monotonous life at home but she also had a pretext to ignore her husband and to keep him at a distance, thereby making herself more desirable. If the husband failed to renew his contact with his wife, she was in a precarious situation, as Sei Shōnagon explains in her diary. She lists under her entry on "Things That have Lost Their Power":

A woman, who is angry with her husband about some trifling matter, leaves home and goes somewhere to hide. She is certain that he will rush about looking for her; but he does nothing of the kind and shows the most infuriating indifference. Since she cannot stay away for ever, she swallows her pride and returns. (MORRIS 1967, p. 132)

This entry is interesting because it depicts a situation that resembles the circumstances of pilgrimages of women in duolocal marriages. By going on a secret pilgrimage and causing her husband to fret over her absence and his loss of face, a woman could reassert her power. But if the husband failed to express his renewed interest in his wife, it could also demonstrate her loss of power.

The greatest ploy that a wife could use against her neglectful husband was to proclaim her independence. This was also much easier

for a woman in a duolocal marriage than for a wife who shared the same residence with her husband, who could in turn exert more control over her. When the author of the *Kagerō nikki*, for example, goes on a pilgrimage to Hase-dera against the wishes of her husband, he quickly comes to meet her at Uji upon her return (KN, pp. 63–68). On another occasion the author decides spontaneously to go on a pilgrimage to a mountain temple, the Narutaki Hannya-ji, in order to evade Kaneie, who has been neglecting her. Imagine Kaneie's embarrassment, when he, one of the most powerful men at the court, follows her out to the temple and tries several times to persuade her to return to the capital with him but fails. Furthermore, there has been talk that she has become a nun. Were she to become a nun for real, he would lose his face completely. The author finally gives in when her father asks her to return home, and Kaneie is finally able to make her return to the capital (KN, pp. 112–35). She then avenges her defeat by accompanying her father on a pilgrimage to Hase-dera. This infuriates Kaneie so much that he bursts in on their preparatory purifications "making himself generally objectionable, knocking over incense, throwing rosaries up on high shelves, and otherwise behaving in a most remarkable manner" (SEIDENSTICKER 1990, p. 114). But since she is with her father, there is nothing he can do.

#### GRANTING THE DESIRED BIRTH OF A CHILD

The success of a woman's marriage did not depend only on the constancy of her husband's affections but also on whether she bore him children. Again women turned to miracle temples, especially those devoted to Kannon, to ask for assistance. Kannon's association with the granting of the desired birth of a child stems from the promise to women in chapter 25 of the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Kannon-gyō*:

If any woman desiring a son worships and pays homage to the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, she will bear a son happy, virtuous, and wise. If she desires a daughter, she will bear a daughter of good demeanor and looks, who of old has planted virtuous roots, beloved and respected by all.

(KATŌ 1975, p. 321)

Kannon was linked to an issue that concerned primarily women and their status. On the one hand, it was important for women to produce a son and thus a potential heir for their husband. On the other hand, daughters were equally important since they could assure the husband political leverage once his daughter was married. One standard example is of course the Fujiwara dominance of the imperial family through Fujiwara daughters.

Therefore, the ability to produce both sons and daughters was important for aristocratic women and would ensure their continued influence. One example of how success in marriage and bearing children are interrelated comes from the *Kagerō nikki*. There are many indications that the author makes her pilgrimages to various temples—in particular the Kannon temples Ishiyama-dera and Hase-dera—to pray for a daughter:

And unhappily I still had but one child. For years I had gone from temple to temple praying for another, but I had exhausted my prayers and was reaching an age where it seemed unlikely that they should be answered. I began to think that I should like to adopt some likely little girl of good rank who could be a companion to the boy and a consolation to him after my death.  
(SEIDENSTICKER 1990, pp. 125–26)

She then decides to adopt Kaneie's daughter by the granddaughter of the late Councilor Kanetada. There are other indications that a daughter was a burning wish for Michitsuna's mother. Immediately before the adoption she requests that a priest at Ishiyama-dera pray for her—a request that leads to the prediction that “Her house will be close to the Emperor and will be able to run the country as it chooses” even though she realizes that this could hardly be accomplished through her son (SEIDENSTICKER 1990, p. 125). After the adoption, however, when the same priest sends her a message that he is still carrying out prayers in her behalf, she remarks:

“I have no more ambitions for myself,” I answered, “and what have I to expect from the Buddha? But pray instead that my son may grow into a decent and respected gentleman.”  
(SEIDENSTICKER 1990, p. 137)

In other words, now that her wish to have a daughter has been fulfilled she has no more ambitions for herself and hopes only for the well-being of her son. This explains why her pilgrimages lose their dramatic fervor once she adopts her husband's daughter by another woman.

Even if women were not the only ones to ask for the birth of a child, one has to consider the implications of such a request for both sexes. For a courtier the birth of a daughter meant the possibility of gaining political influence for his family, whereas for a female aristocrat it not only implied political clout for her family but also gaining leverage when dealing with her husband, especially because children were raised matrilocally. In the case of the *Kagerō nikki*, the author ponders the future on the occasion of her son's coming-of-age ceremony,

which causes Kaneie to spend much time at her residence: "He was most kind; still I could not but wonder whether, now that the boy had officially reached maturity, this was not the last time I was to be so honored" (SEIDENSTICKER 1990, p. 92). Indeed, Kaneie himself jokes after his wife's adoption of his daughter by another woman: "I had just about decided to stop coming here...and now to have a pretty little thing like this turn up" (SEIDENSTICKER 1990, p. 130). The connection is also very clear in a story from the *Ishiyama-dera engi*, according to which Fujiwara no Kuniyoshi's wife made a pilgrimage to Ishiyamadera in the Tenji era (1124-1125). She was desperate because she was without child and her husband had deserted her. During her retreat at Ishiyama she had a dream that Nyoirin Kannon gave her a wish-fulfillment jewel and told her that this was her child. Upon awakening she found the jewel in her hand and returned home. Shortly afterwards her husband returned to her, she bore a son (Fujiwara no Narizane), and the family prospered (*Nihon emaki taisei* 18, pp. 58-59, 138-39).

#### CURE OF ILLNESS

Even though pregnancy was certainly desired by many women, it also entailed many dangers. Again pilgrimages provided a solution. Noblewomen's pilgrimages were often occasioned by illness, especially gender-specific illnesses such as spirit possession and complications during pregnancy. If she was physically able, the ill woman could go while the affliction lasted. In 962 the author of the *Kagerō nikki* was taken to the Narutaki Hannya-ji by her husband Kaneie because she suffered from a persistent cough that was attributed to spirit possession (KN, p. 36). According to the *Eiga monogatari*, the Shōkyōden Consort Genshi went on a pilgrimage to Kōryū-ji at Uzumasa to induce an overdue birth. Esoteric rites and recitations of the *Yakushikyō* were performed during her stay. Unfortunately, the rituals were only partly successful for Genshi, because her pregnancy is revealed as false (EM 1, pp. 335-37). The reason why the Uzumasa, dedicated to Yakushi, was considered to be particularly efficacious in helping Genshi with her birth, was because the *Yakushikyō* promises that "women in labour shall be quickly freed from pain and give birth to good and healthy children, if they invoke that Buddha and make offerings unto him" (VISSER 1935, p. 537). Here we see a clear connection between Kōryū-ji and the Yakushi cult. Kannon, however, was also considered efficacious in such a situation. In the *Eiga monogatari* Kinshi is fatally ill after giving birth to a son. As her death approaches, people begin to invoke Kannon's name:

There was no one, not even the most insignificant, who was not weeping and repeating “Kannon”; no one who was not rising and kneeling in obeisance, his hands pressed to his brow. The sounds of mystic invocations and sutra-reading were lost in the roar of voices calling on Kannon. Since a single utterance of that sacred name by one person is said to have greatest efficacy, it seemed that with the invocations of so many, praying in single-hearted accord, Kinshi must surely survive in spite of everything.

(McCULLOUGH and McCULLOUGH 1980, p. 676)

In the *Makura no sōshi*, Sei Shōnagon witnesses during her stay at Kiyomizu-dera how a messenger commissions prayers for the safe delivery of a woman of the high aristocracy (MS 1, pp. 277–78). Because of Kannon’s acknowledged powers to ensure safe childbirth, the author of *Yoru no nezame* has his main character Nezame moved to Ishiyama-dera in the last stages of her first pregnancy to ensure her safe delivery (YN 1, pp. 101–103).

In the cases of acute illness the ill woman could also vow to make a pilgrimage after her recovery. The *Eiga monogatari* relates that Senshi, Fujiwara no Michinaga’s sister, recovered from a serious illness caused by spirit possession because she became a nun and also vowed to visit Ishiyama-dera annually in the Ninth Month and to make pilgrimages to Hase-dera and Sumiyoshi. She made a pilgrimage to Hase-dera the following month, directly after her recovery, and continued making yearly pilgrimage to Ishiyama until her death (EM 1, pp. 269, 367). It was clear to Heian courtiers that only a pilgrimage to a temple with established miracle powers was certain to lead to a cure. A temple that had been founded recently did not have the necessary properties. Someone who relied on a newly founded temple might end up like Fujiwara no Michinaga, who, according to the *Eiga monogatari*, advised his daughter the Grand Empress Kenshi, suffering from a severe illness, to go on retreat at Hōjō-ji, a temple founded on the grounds of his former mansion:

Kenshi directed her ladies to prepare costumes for the Hōjō-ji retreat, which she had decided to begin on the Thirteenth of the Eighth Month. If she recovered, she vowed, she would make a pilgrimage of gratitude to the temple in the Tenth Month. (McCULLOUGH and McCULLOUGH 1980, p. 744)

Kenshi relied completely on the miracle powers of Michinaga’s new temple. However, both she and her father were to be sadly disappointed. Far from improving, Kenshi’s condition deteriorated with every passing day. As the *Eiga monogatari* has it: “Her failure to recover was a

bitter blow to Michinaga, who had been confident of the curative powers of a retreat at his temple” (McCULLOUGH and McCULLOUGH 1980, p. 746). Certainly an outcome like this was too great a risk to be taken for most courtiers. It is therefore easy to understand why they preferred temples with long-standing reputations.

#### GAINING SALVATION

Once a woman had been securely married and had borne children for her husband, she could start thinking about the next world. The author of the *Kagerō nikki* states her hope that her pilgrimages will help her prepare for her future renunciation (KN, p. 108). The author of the *Sarashina nikki* is even more direct:

My position had greatly improved, both in social standing and material wealth, and I had also succeeded in rearing my little bud exactly as I wished. The time had come, I told myself, to think about preparing for my life in the world to come. Towards the end of the Eleventh Month I set out on a pilgrimage to Ishiyama.  
(MORRIS 1975, p. 89)

In general it should be observed, however, how rare it is for these aristocratic women to devote themselves to other-worldly concerns. Even when they had achieved all they wanted in this world, as long as they had a husband and young children they still had obligations that tied them to this world. Thus young mothers made pilgrimages for the benefit of their children—especially their daughters—and even Sugawara no Takasue no Musume, who is perhaps the most spiritual of all the aristocratic women considered here, writes:

Now that I was able to do exactly as I wished, I went on one distant pilgrimage after another. Some were delightful, some difficult, but I found great solace in them all, being confident that they would bring me future benefit. No longer having any sorrows of my own, I concentrated on providing the best possible upbringing for my children and waited impatiently for them to grow up. I also prayed for my husband's future, and I was confident that my prayers would be answered.  
(MORRIS 1975, p. 99)

Pilgrimage was a way to prepare for one's life in the next world at a time when one still had obligations in this world that kept one from retiring completely. In contrast to renunciation, it is an attractive form of worship because it constitutes only a temporary removal from society. It was thus a step toward renunciation but not as irrevocable. The Michitsuna no Haha and the main character of the *Izumi Shikibu nikki*

both express their wish to renounce the world but also their inability to do so at this point in their lives.

It would be extremely interesting to see how women who had actually taken the tonsure would state their reasons for pilgrimage. It is difficult to find sources in regard to this point. One case is Senshi's last pilgrimage to Ishiyama in the *Eiga monogatari*:

When Senshi arrived at her destination, the sight of the sacred hall brought new access of grief. "This is my last visit to the dear image I have revered for so many years," she thought in deep distress. Instead of offering the usual prayers and services, she ordered a fire ritual, in the hope of cleansing herself of defilements and ensuring an auspicious future karma. The temple monks were astonished and dismayed when they realized that all her petitions were concentrated on her last sad journey.

(McCULLOUGH and McCULLOUGH 1980, pp. 238–39)

It is unclear whether the account reflects Senshi's own motivations for making the pilgrimage or what the author, who had the privilege of knowing that this happened to be Senshi's last pilgrimage before her death, presumed her motivations to be. We can also give an example from the *Kagerō nikki*, which contains a story about an elderly woman—Michitsuna no Haha's mother—who is terminally ill and decides to go to a temple. The mother of the author is given the tonsure before she passes away at a temple and *nenbutsu* 念佛 are carried out after her death (KN, pp. 40–45). We can glean from these examples that it was seen as appropriate to be concerned with one's after-life if death was imminent. Similarly, taking an interest in one's salvation also implied that one expected to die soon, an interest that was clearly inappropriate for healthy young women.

On the whole, there is no evidence of a clear division between this-worldly and other-worldly benefits. Instead, both this-worldly and other-worldly benefits seem to have been considered a form of future benefits that varied as women's life cycles progressed, from young girls praying for a promising marriage, young women praying for a child, pregnant women praying for safe delivery, married women hoping to mend their marriages, and women who had achieved all of the above and were free to think about their life to come. Needless to say, the female life cycle was constructed primarily around reproductive functions. As Sei Shōnagon knew very well, one of the very few alternatives for an aristocratic woman was to become an attendant:

When I make myself imagine what it is like to be one of those women who live at home, faithfully serving their husbands—

women who have not a single exciting prospect in their life yet who believe that they are perfectly happy—I am filled with scorn. Often they are of good birth, yet have had no opportunity to find out what the world is like. I wish they could live for a while in our society, even if it should mean taking service as Attendants, so that they might come to know the delights it has to offer. (MORRIS 1967, p. 20)

Nevertheless, the general expectation was that an aristocratic woman's life cycle would follow the pattern described above even if it included a temporary engagement as an attendant, as in the case of the author of the *Sarashina nikki*. The often rehearsed reluctance to allow young women to renounce the world permanently, a request granted only in severe cases of illness, provides much evidence in this respect.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, what are we to make of these pilgrimages? Accompanied by elaborate rituals and involving considerable wealth, noblewomen's pilgrimages were more than a casual stroll to a nearby temple. They required meticulous rituals and special clothing and were time and energy consuming. Naturally, they bore marks of an elite culture, designed to display rank, status, wealth, and gender, but we should not view these factors as indications of insincerity or decadence that undermine the religious nature of the pilgrimage. Of course, from a modern perspective a trip from Heian-kyō to Kiyomizudera or Ishiyama-dera does not seem like much of a feat, but to noblewomen who were not used to traveling and did not have the convenience of modern transportation, even a short journey like this required considerable effort. Furthermore, what mattered was not the distance traveled but the efficacy of the temple and its main image. At the climax of noblewomen's pilgrimages was, therefore, the retreat at the temple complete with a divine dream revelation.

Similarly, noblewomen's pilgrimages were primarily motivated by this-worldly concerns. The this-worldly orientation of noblewomen's pilgrimages should by no means be viewed as a gender-specific characteristic. Their male counterparts also prayed for this-worldly benefits. The exact nature of women's motivations, however, was clearly related to their gender. As we have seen, the motivations followed a woman's life cycle. It is certainly possible that the sources downplay other-worldly concerns because they are primarily occupied with romance, but the consistency across different kinds of genres is convincing enough to suggest a high degree of reliability. If these noblewomen



express in their own words that they find spiritual solace in this-worldly benefits, is it up to us to determine otherwise?

We can also conclude that it is a mistaken notion to think that pre-modern pilgrimages were necessarily bound together by a sense of universal community and were largely free from conflict. Given the absence of *communitas*, one ought to ask whether it makes sense to speak of liminality in the context of noblewomen's pilgrimages during the Heian period. I believe it does; however, it is clear that it is a different kind of liminality from the one we encounter, say, in the context of Edo-period *okagemairi*. Instead, the liminality of noblewomen's pilgrimages rests in the experience of travel. In other words, it is similar to what Nancy TRAPPER has found about pilgrimages of Muslim women in Turkey, for whom a visit to a shrine is one of the very few occasions when they can leave their home alone:

The shrines that are visited in this way are most often those on the periphery of the town and the walk there provides women with one of the few opportunities for strolling... by themselves—an occupation usually held to be appropriate only for men.  
(TRAPPER 1990, pp. 245–46)

In the same way, for a Heian noblewoman, who hardly ever stepped beyond the limitations of her residence, the physical movement to a temple must have constituted a clear contrast to everyday life. This contrast was intensified by the required purification rituals, fasts, and special dress. Finally, the opportunity to travel outside her residence, spend several nights at a temple praying and experiencing divine dreams, must have added to the sense of having stepped outside the realm of her usual daily occupations. As a result, the pilgrimages could have initiatory qualities, as in the case of a young girl being sent off to a temple in order to secure her smooth entry into aristocratic society. In other cases the pilgrimage was undertaken to alleviate physical or mental distress, such as illness or neglect by her husband. It could also be used to show one's independence and to manipulate an inattentive husband into paying more attention to one's needs.

It is important to notice pilgrimage was not only about suffering. It included many ludic elements on the way home that balanced the elements of abstinence on the way to the temple. In addition, it cannot be denied that the pilgrimages often showed a close resemblance to sight-seeing, and in the case of wealthy pilgrims there were obvious components to show off one's status. Despite the presence of a strong ascetic tradition of pilgrimage in Japan, it is clear then that even in premodern times there were people who had the wealth and leisure to make a pilgrimage a pleasant excursion. As recent scholarship has

shown, there is a coexistence of ascetic/other-worldly and ludic/this-worldly aspects of pilgrimages. One has to be careful, however, not to identify the latter with modernity—or worse, to interpret it as a decline of religiosity and piety.

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