INTRODUCTION

A Darkness of the Heart

"Darkness of the heart" -- kokoro no yami -- is a literary theme essential to any understanding of the religious construction of motherhood in medieval Japan.[1] This self-deprecating expression appears so widely in the poems of Heian period Japan as to seem almost cliche. Kokoro no yami refers to the love for a child that blinds one to the child's faults, clouds one's judgement, and, perhaps most importantly, creates an attachment to the world that becomes an obstacle to salvation. A parent's attachment to a child in this context is given a Buddhist reading as sinful and yet it is understood to be an inevitable and poignantly beautiful aspect of human experience. The motif properly refers to fathers as well as mothers and was used by both throughout the Heian period and into the Kamakura to describe their own feelings of parental love, attachment, and grief in poetry, in diaries, and the like. However, the idea behind it, a mentally and spiritually incapacitating concern for a child's welfare, came to be associated more closely with mothers in the literature of the Muromachi period. Examples can be found from the mad-women plays of the Noh theater to the popular hagiography of the so-called otogizøshi. Clearly the poignancy and poetic force of the topos lies in the inevitability of parental attachment, as expressed in the phrase ko wa sangai no kubikase (literally, "a child is the neck fetter [that keeps one bound to] the three worlds"), meaning that the inescapable love one feels for one's own child is the ultimate obstacle to salvation.[2] This yearning for a child and the pain of separation through death of parent and child has been a recurrent theme from the beginnings of Japanese literature. In fact, it is with a work centering on the intense feelings of a mother that the history of Japanese 'fiction' begins.

The first work of Japanese prose, Tosa nikki, compiled by Ki no Tsurayuki around 935, belongs to a genre known to modern scholars as the poetic diary, uta nikki.[3] The poetic diaries of classical Japanese literature are anthologies of poems

strung together by narrative prose sections. Often these works, especially travel diaries, were intended as primers of poetry in which the author would offer critique of the poems collected, note their successful aspects, and point up their deficiencies. In such a case, the poems could have all been composed by the author and spoken by characters in the diary; they could be actual poems received from lovers, family members, and other corespondents, or ones heard at poetry gatherings. These works, several of which will be discussed below and referred to simply as diaries, were not kept as records of daily events, but rather written as reminiscences, remembrances of the past based on draft copies of poems sent and saved scraps of poems received.

Tsurayuki's Tosa nikki constantly returns to a mother's overwhelming feelings of grief for her dead child.[4] This diary is a compilation of poems with running commentary, in which a woman returning from the provinces by boat records and critiques the poems of her fellow passengers. Many of the poems are attributed to a member of the party whose daughter had died during the family's stay in Tosa. While Tsurayuki wrote this poetic memoir in a female narrative voice, there is evidence that he in fact had himself lost a daughter during his tenure in the provinces and that the laments of the mother in his text are in fact an outpouring of his own emotional pain. Indeed, the last two poems in the work are attributed to the father of the dead girl. After these two poignant poems, the diary ends with the lines, "It is hopeless to try to record all the unforgettable and painful things that come to mind. After all, I suppose the best thing to do is to tear up these sheets at once."[5]

There are many reasons that could have lead Tsurayuki to chose a woman for his first-person narrator.[6] For instance, the diary is first and foremost a treatise and primer for the art of the composition of Japanese poetry, or waka, and as such is written in the Japanese language using the Japanese syllabary. At this time, of course, Japanese writing was very much associated with women and Chinese with men. Another reason for Tsurayuki's choice of a woman's voice both as narrator and as the composer of the poems about the dead girl could be that a mother's loss of her child was perceived to be more pathetic than a father's.

In the last lines of the diary, there is even an indication that perhaps, in some way, such feelings are not becoming for a man. The feelings of the mother who carried the child in her womb for nine months and risked her life bearing it, the grief of the mother who was principally responsible for the care and education of the child would strike a deeper chord of sympathy with the reader.

The Religious Construction of Motherhood in Medieval Japan

Tsurayuki's Heian period readership knew well how a mother's fate in this world depended upon her child's success. It was incumbent upon the women of the Heian court and its satellites to produce and educate excellent children. Later generations of Japanese would transform the desire or longing of a mother for her child into a religious idea. Excessive love of a child was a ubiquitous sin. By the medieval period, the salvation of mothers as represented in popular hagiography was firmly linked to the idea of the fall of the mother due to emotional attachment to her child. The child, who is the cause of the mother's perdition, must exert himself or herself to the utmost to rescue the woman from damnation in the next life.

This dissertation traces the development of the idea that saints must first and foremost save their mothers. I will argue that a shift in religious notions about motherhood accompanied a thoroughgoing transformation of kinship and the sex-gender system of medieval Japan. An important aspect of this cultural metamorphoses of motherhood through Buddhism is the strong influence of the women's literature of the Heian period on later eras. As mothers of the Heian period had been reliant upon their children to insure their rank in hierarchical court society, so mothers of religious legend would pin their hopes for salvation on a promising child. By the end of the medieval period, motherhood became the cause for women's suffering in the next world now based in biological as well as emotional etiologies of damnation. This Introduction sets the Heian period literary and religious background which was to prove so influential for the medieval thinking about mothers and motherhood.

At the beginning of the medieval period, the place of women in the family

changed. Chapter One explores this important transformation. Daughters had been life long members in their fathers' families, but increasingly they came to be seen as temporary people who would leave the family at marriage to join an outside group. This shift, which occurred under continental influence, spelled the end of inheritance rights for women. It also redefined the place of women in this patriarchal society. Whereas women had been daughters at the beginning of the medieval period, they were recast as mothers. As we shall see, the idea that women are to be seen above all as mothers is closely related to the soteriology imported with Chinese Buddhist death ritual. Within the ancestral cult, it is only as mothers that women can find salvation. There is no place for daughters on the family altar; they must associate themselves with another family to bear sons who will nurture them into ancestorhood. This ritual logic of Chinese funerals played a key role in the transfiguration of Japanese kinship beliefs. However, even as memorial practices came to reflect this new vision of family, personal religious practice left room for continuing relationships between daughters and their departed parents. Also there was another soteriological scheme, separate from and somewhat contradictory to the ancestral cult; one that promised women salvation through sex reassignment.

Chapter Two explores the bonds between daughters and mothers as expressed in women's religious practice during the thirteenth century. While its primary focus is on the dedication of a nude Jizø statue by an eighty-three-year-old nun who wishes to save her mother, this chapter also examines the relationship between motherhood and a soteriology for women in the medieval period. In votive documents women expressed a special concern for the salvation of their mothers and also indicated that they saw their sex as an obstacle to salvation. Chapter Two introduces two doctrines which were to be deeply influential for the whole of the medieval period; these are the soteriological problem of the five obstacles and its solution, the transformation of the female body to male. These doctrines framed the problem of women's salvation in very abstract terms, but the legends of great monks as they evolved over the course of the medieval period told a different story. In popular hagiography, motherhood became a sin.

Chapter Three examines stories of monks saving their mothers. Because of deep emotional attachment to their children, mothers were consigned to hell. Whereas in earlier tales, mothers had been important either as loving mentors or as pernicious lost souls, in the late medieval period their portrayal became more complex as the stark lines of setsuwa gave way to the subtler shadings of Muromachi period short fiction, or otogizøshi. The mother of the sixteenth-century hagiographic literature explored in this chapter is more than just the object of salvation by her son. She is a sinner, but she is also a most sympathetic character. In her sin of kokoro no yami, the darkness of maternal obsession, the readers or hearers can discern the contours of the human heart and see themselves in these stories. They can see themselves as fallen mother, as saving son or as both. These late medieval narratives are deeply felt meditations on Buddhism and the family. What does it mean to leave home and take Buddhist orders? What are lessons that the love of family and the pain of separation teach? If these are stories about impermanence, they are also stories about the miraculous ability of the affective bonds between parent and child to transcend even death. While emotional attachment is given a Buddhist interpretation as sinful, the monk's love of his mother and her continuing influence on him from beyond the grave, or from the other side of madness, is celebrated. These are ambivalent narratives which refuse to release the religious quest from the ties of kinship.

Chapter Four also explores the theme of motherhood and salvation in late medieval religious narratives, but approaches from a different angle. Early on in the medieval period, the link between women's bodies and their postmortem fate had been expressed in the most abstract terms. As the religious discourse on motherhood developed, however, the association between female reproductive biology and damnation became quite concrete. By the end of the medieval period menstruation and childbirth were constructed as polluted and polluting states and became a central topic in the doctrinal conversation about women's salvation and the salvation of mothers. Cults arose dedicated to the salvation of women through rituals of the "blood pool hell," where mothers were submerged in a pond of blood for no offense beyond biology. These beliefs were carried to

women throughout Japan by travelling nuns who influenced the development of the stories associated with the blood pool and women's salvation. At the same time, the identity between the mother's body and the fetus or infant was called into question. This chapter takes up stories about violence toward pregnant women to examine the relationship between the maternal body and new life. We will also hear of the ghosts of women who die in childbirth and late pregnancy. Like the mothers of Chapter Three, damned for the love of a son, it is the attachment of these ghosts to the child that condemns them to remain in this world. The gruesome ritual practices associated with saving the ghosts, however, remind us that these are not just didactic tales or campfire stories told for edification, amusement, and titillation. They represent religious convictions about the body and about family which, although they would change over the course of centuries, were deadly serious matters for the audiences of this literature. The stories simultaneously created and were reflective of medieval Buddhist beliefs about motherhood. Chapter Five focuses on the legend and cult of Ch¥jøhime, a daughter who, in saving her mother, became a savior for all women.

Ch¥jøhime's vita, in its many versions, was created by Pure Land preachers during the medieval period, as were her relics. Her character and the events of her narrative were always being developed through the practice of performance. Ch¥jøhime is most famous as an abused step-child; she is also known as the woman who created the Taima mandara. This sacred image, which exists in an eighth-century original and many later copies, is a tableau of Amida's Pure Land and the salvation of an Indian queen through birth in this paradise. The queen, VaidehΔ, is the mother of an inimical son who would murder her for standing in the way of his regicide/patricide. The legend of Ch¥jøhime grew up around this image and the life of the putative patron overtook that of the holy icon itself in popularity. The story of this daughter whose life was dedicated to the salvation of her mother draws inspiration from the VaidehΔ story, but also models itself on the late medieval Japanese hagiographies of Ûåkyamuni Buddha. Ch¥jøhime's mother's dying injunction to her daughter capture the essence of kokoro no yami, the concern of a mother for a child that throws up an obstacle to salvation. One

her deathbed she saddles her infant daughter with the dual burdens of the blame for her damnation and the responsibility for her salvation. At the age of seven, Ch¥jøhime rediscovers this commitment and it determines the course of the rest of her life. It is her suffering and her dedication to her mother that make her holy, and as such, a conduit for the salvation of the women who listen to her tale or see her relics. Her cult was also closely associated with religious and medical discourses on the female reproductive process. She was the chaste virgin daughter whose bond to her mother precludes the creation of a new family, but was also the object of men's desire as well as the victim of her stepmother's sexual slander. Eventually she became a savior from sexually transmitted diseases or disorders of the reproductive system.

Ch¥jøhime's story ties together several of the themes of this dissertation, and the Conclusion serves to demonstrate these connections and to deepen our understanding of the religious construction of motherhood in medieval Japanese religious culture. As the kinship structures, class systems, political institutions, and religious ideologies of medieval Japan transformed themselves in myriad ways, stories and practices kept pace with these changes. At times they led the way. The Heian period was the crucible of Japanese culture, the understanding of motherhood current in the poetry and prose of the eleventh and twelfth centuries has had a profound influence for Japanese culture as a whole. Thus, the focus on the dependence of mothers upon their children that was given voice in the literature of the Heian period through the idea of kokoro no yami grew over the course of the medieval period into a fully developed discourse on the sinfulness of mothers. The origins of many aspects of this complex system of beliefs can be traced to the Heian period.

Some Reflections on Childbirth and Motherhood in the Heian Period

Another uta nikki, the early eleventh-century diary of Murasaki Shikibu, famous author of Genji monogatari, opens with the lying-in, labor, and delivery of her mistress, the imperial consort Jøtømon'in Fujiwara no Shøshi, at the Tsuchimikado mansion where the lady's father Fujiwara no Michinaga lived.[7]

She and her entourage have been moved to her father's house for the birth following the custom of the day. It is fitting that Shøshi should have borne her baby, Prince Atsuhira, at her father's residence, since it was the birth of this grandson that marked Michinaga's arrival as the most powerful man at court. Other men's daughters also served the emperor and could have had his child. In fact, Fujiwara no Teishi, the sister of Michinaga's principal rival, his nephew Korechika, had died trying in the year 1000.[8] Her tragedy would become Michinaga's triumph.

Such deaths in childbirth were attributed to possession of the birthing woman by the jealous spirits of her rivals. Obviously, Shøshi would have had much to fear in this regard since her cousin Teishi had died in childbirth eight years before and would certainly have been considered a restless ghost. Eminent Buddhist priests employed as exorcists gathered to insure her defence against these attacking forces, with a lady-in-waiting, or her substitute, assigned to each to act as a medium for the possession. The exorcist's job was to force the malevolent spirit to enter the medium instead of the birthing woman and then subdue it. Lady Murasaki describes the possession of the mediums:

> What awful wails of anguish came from the evil spirits at the moment of birth! Gen no Kurødo had been assigned Holy Teacher Shin'yo, Hyøe no Kurødo someone called Myøso, and Ukon no Kurødo the Master of Discipline from Høj¥ji Holy Teacher Chisan was in charge of Miya no Naishi's enclosure: [the woman acting as her stand-in] was thrown to the ground by evil spirits and was in such distress that Holy Teacher Nengaku had to come to [Chisan's] aid with loud prayers. It is not that his powers were on the wane but that the evil proved so very persistent. The priest Eikø was in charge of Lady Saishø's substitutes and he became hoarse from chanting all night: when none of the women [she] asked to accept the spirits were able to do so, there was uproar.[9]

Spirit possession also plays a very important role as an expression of female jealousy in Murasaki Shikibu's fictional work. Murasaki's diary makes it clear that these dramatic incidents in the Tale of Genji were part of her actual experience and not a novelistic conceit. Doris Bargen has discussed the representations of spirit possession, or mono no ke, in Genji monogatari as an

outlet for female aggression in the novel. She suggests that it was one of few recourses open to women in the polygynous society of the Heian court, which socialized women against expressing anger directly.[10] Below we will return to this theme of the effects of polygyny on Heian court women. These women, through their profound cultural influence, did much to shape Japanese ideas about motherhood over the subsequent centuries.

Jøtømon'in's delivery of Atsuhira, and the births of many of Michinaga's other grandchildren, are described in detail in Eiga monogatari, the chronicle of Michinaga's rise to power.[11] Judging from the level of detail in the narratives, childbirth in and of itself was clearly a matter of great interest and concern to the readers of these works, but these births also carried with them the flush of political intrigue. One of the most famous aspects of the Heian period is the role of "queen mothers" in Fujiwara marriage politics. In his early thirteenth-century historiographic work the Gukanshø, Tendai priest and Fujiwara clan member Jien claims that all emperors since the eighth-century Shømu have been descendants of Fujiwara Kamatari on their mother's side.[12] According to Jien, Fujiwara no Morosuke, an important patriarch in the family of this matrilineal succession, took a pledge of patronage with the Grand Preceptor Jie of Mt. Hiei, the priest Ryøgen. In his pledge, Morosuke willed to "'have the Regency passed to [his] descendants, who will administer state affairs as maternal uncles or maternal grandfathers of Emperors.'" He lit a lamp on Mt. Hiei, which Jien observes still burns; a testimony to the wish of Morosuke. Morosuke's daughter, Anshi, was the mother of the emperors Reizei and Eny¥. From that time through the Goreizei reign, every imperial mother, every regent, and every chancellor was descended from Anshi.[13]

The essential ingredient to good and right government in Japan, Jien emphasizes, is the imperial mother. It is thus women who are the key to Jien's ideal model of government of avuncular Fujiwara control over the imperial institution. This fact is made especially clear by his use of the phrase nyonin jugan, (literally, "female eye-insertion") to refer to the role of Fujiwara women in the affairs of state.[14] In Jien's day, after a Buddhist image was carved, lacquered,

and ready for dedication, a specialist in making eyes from quartz crystal would be called in to place the eyes in the hollow head of the statue. In older, solid, images as well, the eyes were not "opened", that is, painted in, until the moment of dedication. It was this act that brought the image to life and gave it efficacy; only with the eyes in place did the transition from a piece of wood to a miraculous image transpire. Jien's suggestion is that it is women who animate the political process. Just as a Buddhist statue is useless before its eyes are in place, Jien's model of government by Fujiwara uncles and grandfathers does not work without the presence of a Fujiwara Imperial Mother.

The point is demonstrated most graphically in one of Jien's anecdotes. A succession dispute raged in the middle of the tenth century between the brothers Kanemichi and Koretada, Morosuke's sons, but it was resolved in Kanemichi's favor when a note from their late sister Anshi, the mother of Emperor Eny¥, was produced. Jien reports, "Everyone thought it was really crafty of Kanemichi to have had the Imperial Mother write this letter and then to have it handed to the Emperor while the latter was mourning her death."[15]

We shall see below that the centrality of women as mothers in the Heian political system was a key factor in shaping later interpretations of the kokoro no yami theme. As Jean O'Barr, Deborah Pope, and Mary Wyer remind us:

> The maternal is personal, the maternal is political. Mothering - whether expressed as intimate, private experience, as professional specialty, or service work; whether as academic discourse, governmental policy, or literary form -- cannot be understood apart from the forces of ideology and power that surround, suffuse, and shape it at every point.[16]

Never was the institution of motherhood more politically crucial than in Heian Japan. The fortunes of entire families rode on the shoulders of their daughters and those daughters' children.

Daughters, in their capacity as mothers, were the key to the hegemony of the northern branch of the Fujiwara clan (the sekkanke). As seen in the case of the competition between Michinaga and Korechika, these births by Fujiwara

imperial consorts also decided the outcome of rivalries within factions of the sekkanke. This house of the Fujiwara completely dominated Japanese politics for centuries by marrying their daughters to the emperors. These emperors fell largely under the control of Fujiwara uncles and grandfathers who served as regents (sesshø / kanpaku) and chancellors (daijø daijin).

It was not only the Fujiwara clan whose fortunes depended upon their daughters. Other families held political influence and channeled economic power through their daughters. Throughout the period, uxorilocal ("wife-placed") marital residence patterns and matrilineal property inheritance were the rule. The less powerful aristocratic families held great influence through the customary placement of their daughters as wet-nurses (menoto) to the emperors. The sons of these women, breast-brothers of the emperors, were assured bright futures at court.[17]

The importance of women in the gain and loss of familial power during this period cannot be underestimated. However, as Wakita Haruko reminds us, the presence of strong matrilineal tendencies in Heian kinship systems in no way should lead us to think that this society was a matriarchy; ". . . aristocratic Heian women enjoyed relatively high status when uxorilocal marriage and female property inheritance was prevalent, but the society itself was patriarchal."[18] Wakita asserts this against scholars like Takamure Itsue, who suggested that the strong role of court women in the Nara and Heian periods and the persistence of matrilineal property inheritance and uxorilocal marital residence into much later periods is evidence of the matriarchal underpinnings of Japanese society.[19]

Motherhood and Matrilateral Relatives in the Family of the Heian Period

As we will discover in Chapter One, there is general scholarly agreement that the trend over the centuries toward virilocal residence and patrilineal property inheritance began with the highest echelons of society, first the aristocracy and then the warriors, and only later came to be imposed from above on merchants, artisans, and peasants. There is, however, no consensus on how quickly the lower classes embraced the new systems. Still, it is clear that, at least among the

great aristocratic families during the Heian period, it was the male clan chieftains and their male heirs who held the central position of authority within the family, even if daughters did stay home and did receive a share of the property.

The basic kinship unit in the Heian period was the uji or "clan". Membership in this kinship community was reckoned patrilineally and women retained their fathers' name and clan affiliation after marriage. This generally meant worship of the uji's tutelary deities, the right to a share of its property, and burial at its grave sites. Normally, a woman continued to live in her father's house where her husband would visit her regularly. The husband and wife lived separately in what anthropologists and historians of the family call a duolocal arrangement. This is the most classical style of marriage in Japan, tsumadoikon ("wife-visiting marriage"). Examples of this type of marriage can be found throughout classical Japanese literature, from its very beginning with the Man'yøsh¥. Later, uxorilocal marriage arrangements with husband and wife living together at the wife's residence also became quite common.

Virilocal marriages in this period, however, were completely unheard of in the case of principal or secondary wives. The absence of such marriages has been attributed to a taboo restricting two household deities from residing under one roof; a man's mother and his wife, that is, could not live in the same building.[20] Many marriages went through different phases of residential arrangement, depending on external and emotional considerations. If the young couple moved into a new house, this house was almost always provided for the bride by her father. William McCullough says,

> Indeed, the feeling that a married woman should be the owner of her own residence appears to have been so strong among the Kyoto aristocracy that even in the case of a house provided by the husband, the title to the house was sometimes transferred to the wife.[21] (emphasis in original)

It is important at this point to distinguish between the "clan" or uji and the ie or "house". This household was the basic political unit among the Heian aristocracy. Inheritance remained, in the absence of mitigating circumstances,

within the ie, which included daughters. The Chinese-style Taihø legal code of 702 mandated strict progenitorial inheritance with small concessions to younger sons and completely excluded daughters, but it was not heeded in practice. The reformed Yørø code of 718 came somewhat closer to the actual Japanese practice of divided inheritance.[22] This Chinese-inspired Nara-period legal system remained in place throughout the Heian period, but inheritance by daughters continued to far exceed its allowances. Throughout the Heian period, children lived in homes inherited by their mothers and were surrounded by maternal relatives.

A brief illustration of this tradition and its incompatibility with patrilineal kinship reckoning can be found in the case of residence-based titles. Fujiwara no Morosuke, discussed above in connection with his relationship with Jie daishi Ryøgen, was known as Kujø Morosuke, Kujø being the location of his wife's residence which she had inherited from her father. It was typical for sons to leave their homes and move into their wives' homes or houses supplied by their wives' families. In fact, no Fujiwara man bore the same residence name as his father until the late twelfth century. With late-Heian transformations in the kinship system such as the establishment of the narrower stem family, or monry¥, Morosuke's line came to be known as the Kujø line. Still, during the mid-Heian period, children were born, raised, and educated in their mother's homes with their mother's families.

Households were thus, until the end of Heian period, places of some generational depth on the mother's side with no patrilateral presence. Men left home to live with their wives, or went to visit them. Daughters, on the other hand, generally stayed home and their fathers welcomed son-in-laws into the household. Maternal grandparents were responsible for preparing for a new baby. They oversaw construction of a parturition hut or provided a laying-in room, arranged for birth rituals, and prepared the new baby's "birth-clothes" (ubugi) for its fifth-day ceremony as Murasaki's diary attests. On the other hand, it was not uncommon for paternal grandparents to not even see the child until it was a few years old.[23] In this regard, is worth noting that the members of the court lived within great proximity to one another in the western part of the

Heian capital, itself only about nine square miles in area. Thus, it was not expected that paternal grandparents should take a particular interest in their son's children; it was a daughter's children who were dear.

The Kamakura period saw a rise in virilocal residence practices and increasing restrictions on female inheritance. While women did, in practice, continue to inherit property on into the fourteenth century, the government issued stricter and stricter admonitions against it, and the fact of virilocal marital residence meant that any clan property devolving upon a daughter could easily pass into the hands of another family. Government warnings were issued against daughters' alienating clan property to "outsiders", i.e. their children. Jeffrey Mass tells us, "From prohibitions aimed at outsiders, restrictions against kin, especially female kin, soon followed. When gender-blind legacies became the new target, women started to lose what had become their birthright."[24]

The Heian court had a patrilineal but uxorilocal kinship pattern, clearly an unstable system with inherent tensions. This combination of the patrilineal uji with matrilineal residence, in place throughout the Heian period, was complex and continued to change over the entire period. By the end of the twelfth century, women found themselves in an increasingly difficult position, less and less members of their fathers' families and more and more members of their husbands'. By the fourteenth century, married women were no longer considered members of the house of their birth.[25]

With this background, the pivotal nature of motherhood in Heian period society becomes clearer. Powerful clans exerted control over men of other clans, or of other households of the same clan, who were the husbands of their wives and sisters. Having grown up among his mother's relatives, a man would indeed have felt closer to them than to his father's family. Even his father, who in many cases did not live with the family, was often a somewhat distant figure.

The important role of women in the political fortunes of the great families was the hallmark of the age. On the other hand, a woman's contribution was largely limited to her role as a mother. As Haruo Shirane points out,

> If a Fujiwara daughter did not produce a child

> upon becoming an imperial consort, it was a serious political blow to her parents and brothers and an unending source of shame for the woman. The competition inherent in polygamous marriage demanded that women bear children. [26]
>
> Marriage was polygynous, and a man typically lived with his principal wife and visited other wives and concubines. The decision of which wife was principal, however, was often made ex post facto, depending on factors such as the success of one or more of her children.

In a system like this one, it is clear that women were under tremendous pressure to produce excellent children. The responsibility for the child's education and upbringing rested primarily with the mother. A woman's fate was dependent on the ability of her children, or a least one child, to win favor. This meant a good marriage for a daughter or political success for a son. Chapters Three, Four, and Five will explore the enduring nature of this Heian legacy for the construction of motherhood in Japanese culture. The dependence of mothers on their children in this world became translated into the need to be saved by them in the next. The literature of the Heian period was, of course, largely determinative of the concerns, themes, and dynamics of late medieval "national" culture.

The Salvation of Mothers

As Wakita Haruko has suggested, the depth of attention in Japanese Buddhism in later periods to the salvation of mothers can be in part attributed to this classical social arrangement and its attendant feature of kokoro no yami, the darkness of the heart.[27] Not only were women expected to bear children, but their ranking depended upon the successes of those children. In many cases, their romantic yearnings for their husbands, their feelings of jealousy for their sexual rivals, and their concern over the futures of their children were intertwined in a complex knot of unresolved emotions. The most famous example documenting this phenomenon is the diary of the tenth-century woman known to history as Michitsuna's mother.[28] She was the secondary wife of powerful courtier Fujiwara no Kaneie who was Morosuke's son and Michinaga's father. In the diary she alternately curses Kaneie for his negligence of her and kvells over

her son's modest achievements, in archery. It was more or less a public document, as Bargen points out, and in it she laments every child born to another lover of Kaneie's. Edward Seidensticker characterizes the diary as, "her protest against the marriage system of the time and her exposition of the thesis that all men are beasts."[29] It was Michitsuna's mother's hope that the advancement of her son's career (and she at several points admits to feeling less than sanguine about his talents) might bring about a rapprochement between her and his father. The deep discontent she feels and her desperate emotional reliance on her son -- she states more than once that if it were not for him she would committed suicide -- make her a fitting illustration of the darkest sort of kokoro no yami.

Another woman who is known to us only by her son's name, Jøjin's mother, was also the author of a poetic diary, Jøjin ajari no haha no sh¥.[30] Jøjin's mother compiled her diary in 1071 at the age of 84 lamenting the decision of her son, a prominent cleric in his sixties, to go to China to study at Wu-t'ai shan. She remarks several times on the unparalleled pain his leaving has caused her. Why hadn't she yelled and cried and begged him to stay, she asks herself. Her fondest hope had been that he and his brother, also a priest, would sit on either side of her at her death bed and chant sutras. The diary speaks of her "secret hope" that he would read it upon his return and know the depths of suffering he had caused his, presumably now dead, mother. The diary indeed seems designed to play upon Jøjin's feeling of guilt, going on as it does about her anger at his failure to write her from China, reminiscing about his infancy when he would cry if anyone but his mother picked him up and how her embrace always comforted him immediately. Jøjin's mother envies the Buddha's mother, Lady Måyå, who because of her death a week after the Lord's birth was spared the pain of parting. She goes as far to remark that, "Some children are enemies from a previous existence."[31] Despite her invective, she makes it clear that all of her anger grows out of a love that it is too deep. She blames her own indulgence of him for his callous treatment of her. The living hell that she is caught in and prays repeatedly to be delivered from through death (even railing against the Buddha for not fulfilling her death wish) is a hell of her own making. It is the hell of kokoro no

yami. Jøjin's mother insists that a father could never understand the painful depths of maternal love:

> "A mother's love for her child, regardless of whether she is noble or humble in birth, differs entirely from a father's. While the child is still in her womb she is constantly in pain, whether she is up or lying down, but she never thinks of her own comfort. She prays that the child will be superior to others in looks and in every other respect, and this hope is so strong that even the agony of giving birth to the child is as nothing to her."[32]

Both of these Heian women expressed a degree of emotional attachment to their sons that would be censured by future generations of male literati. Sugano Mieko has suggested that their deep psychological dependence on the mother-child relationship arose largely from the fact that, at the time, men's respect for women was limited to respect for women as mothers.[33] It is also the case that, in a very real way, the social and physical circumstances of court women during the Heian period were determined by the fortunes of their children. This reliance of women upon their children came to be extended, as we shall discover in the following chapters, from life to the world beyond death. As the diary of Jøjin's mother suggests, many women felt that the presence of their priestly sons at their deathbed was necessary for their salvation. Also, as Buddhist death ritual took root and spread in medieval Japan, bringing with it a sinified view of ancestors, women became even more dependent upon their maternal function to save their souls. Within the Chinese-style cult of the dead, a woman could only find eternal rest by joining the lineage of her husband through the act of bearing him sons who survived to nurture her into ancestorhood.

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[1] On this theme, see Wakita Haruko, "Bosei no sonchø to zaigøkan," in Bosei o tou (Kyoto: Jinbun shoin, 1985), pp. 183-185; and, Haruo Shirane, The Bridge of Dreams: A Poetics of "The Tale of Genji" (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), pp. 184-186.

[2] For this phrase, see, e.g., the Noh play Tenko in Yøkyoku taikan, vol. 4, p. 2138. Here it appears as oyako wa sangai no kubikase.

[3] Earl Miner coined the name "poetic diary." See Earl Miner, Japanese Poetic Diaries (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

[4] For a complete English translation of the diary, see A Tosa Journal in Helen Craig McCullough, Classical Japanese Prose: An Anthology (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 73-102.

[5] McCullough, Tosa, p. 102.

[6] See Lynne Miyake, "The Tosa Diary: In the Interstices of Gender and Criticism," in Paul Schalow and Janet Walker, eds., The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 41-73.

[7] See Richard Bowring, Murasaki Shikibu: Her Diary and Poetic Memoirs (Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 43-73. Michinaga lived at the Tsuchimikado, but it actually belonged to his wife.

[8] Bowring, pp. 4-5.

[9] Bowring, pp. 55, 57. Phrases in brackets amended according to alternate possibilities provided in Bowring's notes.

[10] Doris Bargen, A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in the Tale of Genji (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997).

[11] See William and Helen Craig McCullough, A Tale of Flowering Fortunes (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), pp. 227-308, also see pp. 349-360.

[12] Delmer Brown and Ishida Ichiro, The Future and the Past: a Translation and Study of the Gukanshø (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 32.

[13] Brown and Ishida, p. 45.

[14] Brown and Ishida translate this word, jugan, as "the finishing touches" (pp. 37-39), but this does not fully convey the meaning of the original Japanese. Jien means to say that women are pivotal in the system, not that they are icing on the cake.

[15] Brown, p. 48.

[16] Jean O'Barr, et. al., "Introduction" in O'Barr, et. al., ed., Ties That Bind: Essays on Mothering and Patriarchy (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), pp. 13-14.

[17] On Heian period wet nurses, see Nishioka Toranosuke, "Heianchø ni okeru menoto no kenky¥," in Nishioka, ed., Nihon joseishi kø (Shinhyøron, 1977), 81-112. Also see Cameron Hurst, Insei (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 33.

[18] Wakita Haruko, (Suzanne Gay, trans.) "Marriage and Property in Premodern Japan from the Perspective of Women's History," in the Journal of Japanese Studies, 10:1 (Winter, 1984), pp. 77-99.

[19] Feminist thinkers like Simone deBeauvoir and Shulamith Firestone maintain there has never been anywhere such a thing as matriarchal society. See Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976; 1986 Tenth Anniversary edition), p. 72.

[20] Wakita, "Marriage and Property," p. 86.

[21] William McCullough, "Japanese Marriage Institutions in the Heian Period," in the Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, vol. 27 (1967), p. 118.

[22] Jeffrey Mass, Lordship and Inheritance in Early Medieval Japan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 9-10.

[23] McCullough, p. 143.

[24] Mass, p. 101.

[25] Wakita, "Marriage and Property," p. 91.

[26] Haruo Shirane, The Bridge of Dreams, p. 54.

[27] Wakita, "Bosei," p. 203.

[28] Kagerø nikki has recently been given new life in an excellent and bold translation by Sonja

Arntzen (trans.), The Kagerø Diary (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Center for Japanese Studies, 1997). Also see Edward Seidensticker (trans.), The Gossamer Years (Tokyo and Rutland: Tuttle, 1964).

[29] Seidensticker, The Gossamer Years, pp. 7-8.

[30] The diary of Jøjin's mother, Jøjin ajari no haha no sh¥, which she wrote in her eighties to bemoan her illustrious son's passage to China when that famous monk was in his sixties, is summarized in Donald Keene, Travelers of a Hundred Ages (New York: Henry Holt, 1989), pp. 62-67. Hirabayashi Bun'y¥ has annotated and studied this text. See Hirabayashi, Køch¥ "Jøjin ajari no haha no sh¥" (Kasama shoin, 1976) and Hirabayashi,"Jøjin ajari no haha no sh¥" no kisoteki kenky¥ (Kasama shoin, 1978). Also see Bernard Frank, "L'Experience d'un Malhuer Absolu: Son Refus et son Dépassement. L'Histoire de la Mere de Jôjin," in Académie des Inscriptions & Belle-Lettres: Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Anée 1989 (Paris: Diffusion de Boccard, 1989), pp. 472-488. Also Ii Haruki, Jøjin no nissø to sono shogai (Yoshikawa købunkan, 1996), pp. 1-67; and, Watanabe Mitsuo, "Nissø sø sannin no haha," in Okamoto Søkø hakushi kiju kinnenkai,ed., Zen shisø to sono haikei (Shunsh¥sha, 1975).

[31] Keene, Travelers, p. 65.

[32] Translation by Donald Keene in Keene, Travelers, p. 63.

[33] Sugano Mieko, "Øchø kizoku no bosei-kan," in Wakita, ed., Bosei o tou, vol. 1, p. 142.