

Chigo in the Medieval Japanese Imagination

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This article explores the representation of chigo—adolescent males attached to Buddhist temples or aristocratic households who were educated, fed, and housed in exchange for personal, including sexual, services—in medieval Japan. The author discusses how chigo were depicted in historical records, in contemporary short fictional narratives, and in a “Chinese” legend invented by Japanese Tendai monks; the chigo are also compared to the Tang consort Yang Guifei. Fictional and real chigo tend to fall victim to violence, and it is argued that the chigo functions as a surrogate sacrificial victim, a cultural figure whose role is outlined most prominently in the works of René Girard.

SOME BUDDHIST TEMPLES AND aristocratic households in medieval Japan included among their members one or more *chigo* (literally, “children”), adolescent males who were given room, board, and education in exchange for their companionship and sexual services, which they were obliged to provide to high-ranking clerics or elite courtiers. In literary and dramatic texts and in pictures such as those included in illustrated handscrolls (*emaki*), the *chigo* are often portrayed as the center of attention at banquets—seated in the place of honor and drinking from the host’s cup, the *chigo* sings, dances, plays music, or composes poetry while the other guests watch in rapt delight. In the handful of extant short stories from the medieval period featuring *chigo* (a subgenre known as *chigo monogatari*), the *chigo* typically meets a tragic death by suicide, murder, or illness. In some cases, the *chigo* is posthumously revealed to have been an avatar of a bodhisattva, usually Kannon (Avalokitesvara). Around the figure of this “divine boy” accreted a great deal of lore, ritual, and literature whose contradictions pose intriguing and troubling questions. How does the portrayal of *chigo* in cultural discourse compare to the historical record? Why are these sexual playthings simultaneously deified and repeatedly subjected to violence? What does the plight of the *chigo* reveal about the inner workings of medieval Japanese politics, religion, and culture? These questions lead us to a deeper understanding of the intersecting histories of sexuality, violence, kingship, and the sacred in East Asia and beyond.

THE HISTORICAL REALITIES OF *CHIGO*

This study is principally concerned with depiction, which is to say, with the necessary distortions, intentional and otherwise, that writers, painters, and other artists introduce in the process of pretending to represent reality. Yet before discussing how *chigo* were depicted in short fiction, handscrolls, and *noh* plays, it is first necessary to understand how *chigo* actually functioned in medieval Japanese society (by consulting historical records) and to develop a basis for comparison.

Tsuchiya Megumi has written about the function and role that *chigo* played in the private quarters (*in* and *bō*) of medieval Japanese temples, drawing upon temple records instead of accounts from folk literature (2001, 130–77, 239–43). Various classes of children were attached to temples: The *chigo* were second only to the *kindachi*, who were children of high-ranking aristocratic families. Drawing upon examples from temples such as Daigoji and Ninnaji, Tsuchiya postulates three ranks of *chigo*: At the top were those who were sons from ministerial families (*seikake*); below them, sons of temple administrators (*bōkan*); and below them, sons of attendant priests, samurai, and bodyguards of retired emperors (*hokumen no bushi*). In general, at Ninnaji the *chigo* were sons of men who held the sixth rank or higher, and *chigo* of the middle group (sons of temple administrators) were the most active.

Chigo, Tsuchiya observes, had two principal duties. First, they participated in formal processions, religious ceremonies, and public functions. The ceremonies were elaborate, carefully choreographed events in which a central figure, such as an abbot, was transported in an oxen-pulled carriage while others, mostly attendants, walked or rode ahead or behind. These processions were held during important events, such as the inauguration of an abbot, and were indices of the central figure's status. (The central government tried unsuccessfully to limit the number of *chigo* and other attendants who could participate in processions.)

Second, the *chigo* were responsible for providing personal service to their masters. They would serve meals, receive guests, and attend closely to the master.

In exchange, the *chigo* were granted unusual privileges that were not given to the other temple children. They were permitted to wear their hair long (waist length, in some paintings), powder their faces, and dress extravagantly. Some were even permitted to eat meat, and even *chigo* who were sons of temple secretaries or samurai were allowed to sit very close to the seat of honor at a banquet, far above the places where their fathers sat.

Besides the specific duties that *chigo* performed, Tsuchiya shows, the *chigo* were obliged to obey their masters unconditionally; the relationship was likened to that between parent and child or lord and vassal. In many scholarly treatments of the *chigo*, they are viewed largely within the context of *nanshoku* (literally, “male–male sexuality,” but for the most part in premodern Japan, this meant pederasty) because the obedience a *chigo* owed to his master extended to the

bedchamber. Indeed, in literary accounts of the *chigo*, their physical beauty and charm play prominent roles, and *chigo* are often depicted in sexual relationships with Buddhist clerics.

One text that Tsuchiya and others draw upon extensively is *Uki*, a *kambun* text written by Cloistered Prince Shukaku (1150–1202), abbot at Omuro in Ninnaji, that includes extensive remarks on how *chigo* should behave. *Chigo* should rise early for their prayers; they should not walk around after eating with toothpicks in their mouths; they should pick up their feet while walking down corridors. Among the prince's points is that the term of a *chigo* was brief: just four or five years before taking the tonsure at age seventeen to nineteen at the latest (not all *chigo* took the tonsure; others married and set up their own households). From this we can gather that *chigo* ranged in age from twelve to nineteen, an estimate that accords with the literary depictions. *Chigo*, the prince wrote, should use this precious time wisely, studying music and other arts, participating in poetry gatherings, and reading secular literature (Buddhist texts could be studied after taking the tonsure).

Another view of *chigo* gleaned from historical records is that of Hosokawa Ryōichi (2000, 75–79). Hosokawa's points have been thoroughly summarized elsewhere (Faure 1998, 269–73), but they are worth repeating here, as they shed light on the principal question of this study—why *chigo* are so often victims or intended victims of murder and suicide in medieval Japanese literary works.

The most compelling section of Hosokawa's findings is his descriptions of two *chigo* who were kept by Jinson (1430–1508), the aristocratic abbot of the Daijōin temple at the Kōfukuji complex in Nara. Son of the minister and scholar Ichijō Kaneyoshi (or Kanera, 1402–81), Jinson's activities are relatively well known because of the survival of his diary entries in *Daijōin jisha zōjiki*.

First, Hosokawa discusses the career of Aichiyo-maru, the son of a temple administrator at Daijōin. He came to Jinson in 1475, at the age of fourteen, and lived at the temple dressed as a *chigo* and was supported by Jinson until the age of nineteen, when he underwent the coming-of-age ceremony (*genpuku*; this would have entailed cutting his hair, abandoning the use of makeup, and dressing in men's clothing) and took the name Sashida Yasukurō Nobutsugu. (Typically youths either took the tonsure or underwent the coming-of-age ceremony at about age fifteen.) The following year, 1481, he left Nara for Sakai, where he had been appointed manager of an estate owned by Daijōin, which indicates that the Sashida were of the samurai class. In 1498, at the age of thirty-seven, the former Aichiyo-maru killed himself for unknown reasons.

In contrast, the *chigo* Aimitsu-maru entered Jinson's service as a menial in 1461, at age fifteen. Aimitsu-maru's father was a low-ranking servant who was attached to one of the other temples at Kōfukuji and is known to have

performed as a drummer in *noh* performances. Jinson bought Aimitsu-maru, for all intents and purposes, in 1467, from his father when Aimitsu-maru was twenty-one years old. In 1472, Aimitsu-maru took the tonsure and the name Jōami at the age of twenty-six, long past the usual age; his low social status prevented him from actually becoming a priest. After years of illness, he committed suicide in 1474 at the age of twenty-eight while still in the service of Jinson, who conducted his funeral and remembered his former charge with fondness. Hosokawa cites a passage from Jinson's diary that, he says, all but confirms that Jinson had a sexual relationship with Aimitsu-maru, and he suggests that age had robbed the former serving boy both of his privileged status as *chigo* and of Jinson's affections.

Hosokawa (2000, 62, 82) uses the tragic cases of Aichiyo-maru and, especially, Aimitsu-maru to show the underside of the social institution of *chigo*, celebrated with naïve enthusiasm by aesthetes such as Inagaki Taruho (1986) and Matsuda Osamu (1988). For Hosokawa, the relationship between Jinson and Aimitsu-maru/Jōami was one of social and physical domination in which the highborn Jinson owned his lowborn *chigo* body and soul.

The physical relationships between *chigo* and their masters are nowhere more explicitly detailed than in the illustrated scroll known as *Chigo no sōshi* (or, alternatively, *Chigo sōshi* or *Daigo nanshoku-e*). The whereabouts of the original are unknown, but two copies are known to exist, one said to be in the possession of Daigoji temple and bearing a colophon saying it had been copied in 1321.¹ There are five stories (presumably fictional) contained in the scroll, illustrated with pictures that, most notably, depict the *chigo* receiving anal sex and receiving and giving oral sex in a variety of positions.

The episodes may be summarized briefly as follows: (1) An aging priest is no longer able to penetrate his beloved *chigo*. Out of sympathy for his flaccid master, the *chigo* summons a male servant to lubricate his anus, warm it, and expand it using a dildo and his penis. The excited servant masturbates and is later berated by his wife for a lack of sexual stamina. (2) A priest falls in love with another priest's *chigo*. The *chigo* arranges a rendezvous in the garden. After repeated liaisons, the *chigo* takes the tonsure and the two continue their affair. (3) A monk falls in love with the *chigo* of a high-ranking priest. He makes advances toward the *chigo*, who refuses at first but then takes the monk as a lover. Eventually they have sex next to the sleeping priest. (4) A beautiful and proud *chigo* kept by an aristocrat attracts the attention of a low-ranking, old monk. Out of pity, the *chigo* permits the lovelorn monk to penetrate him. (5) A young monk admires the *chigo* of a stern priest. He learns that the *chigo* sleeps in a walled room (*nurigome*; most rooms were enclosed by sliding

¹There is very little firsthand information available about the Daigoji scroll, which is closely held. See Sawa Ryūken (1978, 22) and Takahashi Tetsu (1965).

screens or doors), and sneaks inside to wait. When the *chigo* returns, he realizes that someone is present, but pretends not to notice, and chats with an attendant. As the *chigo* lies on the floor with the lower half of his body in his room, he is penetrated by the hidden monk. Later the *chigo* has a little door installed so that the monk can come and go as he pleases.²

While the existence of a fourteenth-century original cannot be confirmed (indeed, the scroll's handling of its topic is redolent of the early modern, not the medieval, sensibility), the *Chigo no sōshi* scrolls serve as an important reminder of aspects of the relationships between *chigo* and their masters that may occasionally be overlooked in our efforts to view them in the contexts of religion, history, or literature. Sexual attraction fueled the establishment and maintenance of what one might term the *chigo* "system" (*chigo-sei*), and anal penetration of the *chigo* by his master was its highest "ritual." The element of transgression is significant in these fantasies. None of them depict sex between a *chigo* and his master; in all cases, the sex occurs between the *chigo* and an admirer or other type of proxy. While the *chigo* owes his loyalty and subservience to his master, another man intervenes to supplant the master, effectively cuckolding him, and to assert his physical dominance over the master as well as the *chigo*, who typically remains blasé with regard to the action taking place, emotionally removed in a posture of remote beauty.

TALES OF THE CHIGO

If the original 1321 colophon that is reproduced in copies of *Chigo no sōshi* is authentic, then the original illustrations would rank among the earliest examples of *shunga*, Japanese erotic pictures (Hashimoto 1996, 112). For its part, the text would belong to a subgenre of medieval Japanese fiction known as *chigo* tales (*chigo monogatari*). *Chigo* tales constitute a small portion of the medieval Japanese narrative genre known as "companion tales" (*otogi zōshi*). Of the five hundred extant companion tales, ten may be classified as *chigo* tales, that is, stories that feature a *chigo* prominently. They are,

"A Long Tale for an Autumn Night" (*Aki no yo no nagamonogatari*)

"The Tale of Genmu" (*Genmu monogatari*)

"The Mountain" (*Ashibiki*)

"Hanamitsu" (*Hanamitsu*)

"The Tale of Matsuho Bay" (*Matsuho no ura monogatari*)

"The Tale of Mount Toribe" (*Toribeyama monogatari*)

"The Tale of Saga" (*Saga monogatari*)

²For photographs of excerpts of an Edo-period copy of *Chigo no sōshi*, see Hashimoto Osamu (1996). For a deluxe, limited-edition facsimile of an earlier copy, see Inagaki Taruho and Ihara Saikaku (1977, vol. 2).

“The Tale of Ben” (*Ben no sōshi*)

“The New Servant is a *Chigo*” (*Chigo ima mairi*)

“The Story of Kannon’s Manifestation as a *Chigo*” (*Chigo Kannon engi*)³

In most (but not all) of the stories, a monk falls in love with a *chigo*, and typically the results are disastrous. Tales in which a monk falls in love with a woman tend to take on a comic tone, but when the beloved is a *chigo*, the tale often ends tragically. The *chigo* may be kidnapped (*Aki no yo*, *Chigo ima mairi*), falsely accused (*Hanamitsu*), or attacked (*Ashibiki*). Others may attempt to kill him (*Ashibiki*), or he may actually be slain (*Genmu*). Perhaps the *chigo* dies of lovesickness (*Toribeyama*, *Ben no sōshi*), but he is just as likely to drown himself (*Aki no yo*) or to trick others into murdering him (*Hanamitsu*). After death, it may be claimed that the *chigo* was the avatar of a god or bodhisattva (*Aki no yo*, *Ben no sōshi*, *Chigo Kannon engi*, *Genmu*).

Let us take a closer look at three *chigo* tales—“A Long Tale for an Autumn Night,” “The Tale of Genmu,” and “The Mountain”—to see in detail how *chigo* are portrayed in medieval Japanese short fiction.

“A LONG TALE FOR AN AUTUMN NIGHT”

“A Long Tale for an Autumn Night” is the most famous of the *chigo* tales, and it is generally considered to be an influential masterpiece. It dates from the mid-fourteenth century. The plot may be summarized as follows; interested readers are encouraged to consult Margaret H. Childs’s fine translation (1980) or the original classical Japanese version annotated by Ichiko Teiji (1958).

Keikai is a Buddhist priest on Mount Hiei, located northeast of Kyoto and home to a massive complex of temples and cloisters centered upon the Tendai temple Enryakuji. One night Keikai has a dream of a beautiful youth aged sixteen or seventeen. At Onjōji—the temple commonly called Mūdera, Enryakuji’s historical rival, located in Ōmi Province east of Hiei—he catches a glimpse of the boy whom he saw in his dream and falls in love at first sight. (The boy is a temple *chigo*, son of the “Hanazono Minister of the Left.”) Keikai manages to get a letter to the boy via a servant; the correspondence leads to a meeting, and the relationship is consummated. After they part, Keikai falls ill of lovesickness. Hearing of this, the boy leaves Mūdera without permission to visit Keikai at Hiei. Along the way, he and his servant are abducted by a goblin disguised as a mountain ascetic and thrown into a cave with the rest of his victims. Then the priests of Mūdera discover that the boy is gone and that he has been involved

³Printed versions of the originals of all of these texts may be found in the pages of *Muromachi monogatari taisei* (Yokoyama and Matsumoto, 1973–88). There are annotated versions of *Aki no yo no nagamonogatari* (Ichiko 1958) and *Ashibiki* (Ichiko 1989). Margaret H. Childs has published English translations of *Aki no yo no nagamonogatari* (1980), *Genmu monogatari* (1991, 1996b), and *Chigo Kannon engi* (1996a).

with a monk from Hiei. They immediately conclude that Keikai has taken the boy with the consent of the boy's father. The priests destroy the father's residence, then build an ordination platform to provoke the Hiei monks, who jealously guard their exclusive right to ordain Tendai clergy. Hiei raises a massive force of warrior-monks and destroys the Miidera complex; Keikai fights with especial fervor, as he feels the entire matter is his own fault.

Back in the cave, the boy overhears the goblins who are guarding him talking about the battle at Miidera, and he grieves. One of his fellow prisoners turns out to be a storm god who floods the cave and frees all the prisoners. The boy visits his father's residence and Miidera, both in ruins. He sends his servant to Keikai with a note, then drowns himself. Upon finding the boy's body, Keikai and the servant are devastated and go into seclusion in the mountains. The Miidera priests are preparing to leave their wasted temple when they see the god of their mountain, Shinra Daimyōjin, greet the god of Mount Hiei, Hie Sannō. The two gods hold a banquet, and after Hie Sannō leaves, the priests ask Shinra Daimyōjin why he is on such friendly terms with the patron god of their enemy.

The god replies with multiple arguments: first, the familiar one that divine logic cannot be understood by humans. He also claims that the destruction will allow others to accumulate karmic merit by recopying the sūtras and rebuilding the temples that were destroyed, and that the entire affair helped bring Keikai to a true religious awakening. As for the boy, he was actually a manifestation of Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion, who was reborn in the human world to achieve these purposes.

Aside from the goblin and the appearance of the two gods at the end of the story, "A Long Tale for an Autumn Night" is surprisingly realistic. Enryakuji and Miidera were real entities whose long, bitter rivalry included repeated disputes over Miidera's asserted right to an ordination platform and the measure of independence it would have granted, and Hiei's monks attacked Miidera's temples on numerous occasions (Adolphson 2000, 65, 138–40). Moreover, the story ably deploys stock scenes and stereotypes—the highborn *chigo*, love at first sight, illness brought on by lovesickness, a vulnerable figure on a perilous journey, and the suicide of a melancholy youth—that make it quite palatable to readers.

The tale's most interesting developments come at the end, in Shinra Daimyōjin's shocking pronouncements. How could the patron deities of the rival temples hold a friendly banquet after their clients had just emerged from a devastating battle? The misfortunes of Miidera will be compensated for by the opportunities created for accruing karmic merit, and Keikai's troubles are made up for by his newly revived faith. Perhaps the most unsettling aspect of the story, the *chigo*'s suicide, is handled by dehumanizing the boy, by elevating him to divine status. Oddly enough, this last gesture also has deep roots in historical reality, for Tendai monks developed elaborate initiation rituals for *chigo* in which the boys were depicted as avatars of Kannon (Abe 1984b; Matsuoka 2004). In my view, stories such as "A Long Tale for an Autumn Night" and *chigo* initiation rituals

served a similar purpose, namely, to help legitimize the *chigo* system, which violated monastic precepts against all sexual contact.

“THE TALE OF GENMU”

In “The Tale of Genmu,” the protagonist of the title (whose name means “illusion”) is a priest who falls in love with Hanamatsu, a boy from a distant temple. Genmu eventually travels there for a visit, and they spend the night together. When Hanamatsu disappears suddenly, Genmu makes inquiries and learns that he has, in fact, spent the night with a ghost—the boy had been killed seven days earlier in a vendetta. Hanamatsu’s father was killed in a duel when the boy was still small; the boy vowed to exact revenge when he was old enough and, disobeying the wishes of the priests, killed his father’s killer. Shortly afterward, he was, in turn, killed by the son of his victim.

In this story, Hanamatsu’s death shakes the priest Genmu out of his delusions. The experience returns him to a true life of piety and ardent devotion. Even more remarkably, he meets the young man who killed Hanamatsu. Shocked by the experience of killing a young boy, the man ends the cycle of violence by taking Buddhist vows and praying for Hanamatsu’s salvation. The two join their efforts in prayer and are guided into the Pure Land paradise at death. Hanamatsu, the narrator tells us, was actually an avatar of Monju (Mañjuśrī), the bodhisattva of wisdom.

The basic outlines of this story have been noticed in various texts of the medieval period, such as the early fifteenth-century *setsuwa* collection *Sangoku denki* (Tokuda 1988, 504–5); it has even been suggested that the tale has a basis in fact (Gotō 1943, 92–94). As in “A Long Tale for an Autumn Night,” we need not be excessively concerned about the death of the *chigo* protagonist; he is not a real human being but a supernatural figure who assumes human guise in order to bring to spiritual awakening Genmu and the young man who kills Hanamatsu. About “The Tale of Genmu,” Childs has written that

Although the tale contains references to doctrinal condemnations of love between males, the characters show no concern in this regard. Traditionally, of course, clergy were expected to remain completely celibate, but with the development of the belief that such discipline was beyond human ability, many monks acquiesced to their desires, whether heterosexual or homosexual, without necessarily feeling hypocritical or guilty. (1996b, 36–37)

It is true that same-sex liaisons between monks and other males were not singled out for special condemnation; all sexual relationships were forbidden to them. But the notion that such precepts were widely regarded as passé is undermined by the internal logic of the story. Monju assumes the form of the *chigo*, charms Genmu, and is slain in order to bring Genmu and the *chigo*’s killer to religious awakenings.

The source of Genmu's delusion is his infatuation with the *chigo*; the source of the killer's delusion is his thirst for revenge. Only when the two men realize the folly of their ways and renew their devotions to Amida can they be saved. If there is nothing harmless in Genmu's relationship with Hanamatsu, then there is no reason for Genmu to exclaim, "I stupidly let myself become entangled in a an attachment, in a romantic passion ... I was deluded! How ashamed I am!" (Yokoyama and Matsumoto 1973–88, 4:412–13; translation in Childs 1996b, 50). This is the realization that prompts his newfound faith, and it cannot be based on a false premise.

"The Tale of Genmu" resembles "A Long Tale for an Autumn Night" insofar as the *chigo* protagonists of both stories die unnatural deaths (suicide and murder, respectively) but are revealed in the end as manifestations of bodhisattvas (Monju and Kannon, respectively). With the addition of the last detail, the stories at once sacralize the *chigo* and diminish his humanity. The loss of these adolescents is not truly tragic because they were not really human, and their deaths were instruments in grander plans to bring the monks who loved them (or thought they loved them) to experience enlightenment.

"THE MOUNTAIN"

The final story I should like to address in this brief survey of *chigo* narratives is "The Mountain."⁴ Like "A Long Tale for an Autumn Night" and "The Tale of Genmu," it is considered a fine example of the *chigo* tale subgenre. Unlike those two narratives, however, it has never been translated into English, so a more detailed summary of its plot may be helpful.

A Confucian scholar and imperial bureaucrat becomes disillusioned by his lack of advancement and abandons Confucianism for Buddhism. His one tie to the world is a concern for his handsome and talented son; after some searching, he finds a priest on Mount Hiei to whom he can entrust his son for training so that he might enter the Buddhist priesthood. Although it will mean the end of the family line, the son can pray for the repose of his father's soul in the afterlife.

After a few years, the boy is ordained and given the name Gen'i. He later takes a trip to Kyoto and catches a glimpse under the autumn moon of a *chigo* from one of the Nara temples. The *chigo* is the son of an aristocrat, the lord of civil affairs, Tokugō. Eventually the two meet and fall in love, only to part ways and return to their respective temples.

Heartbroken, the *chigo* sets out the following month to find his lover. Unused to travel, he finally makes his way to Jijū's cloister on the mountain. He gets a warm reception on Mount Hiei, but back at his home temple in Nara, the

⁴*Ashibiki* (*no*) is a well-known epithet from Japanese poetry that is sometimes translated as "foot-sore" or "foot dragging" and is typically followed by the word *yama* (mountain). When the *chigo* of the tale asks the monk who has fallen in love with him where he lives, the monk simply replies, "Ashibiki," indicating "the mountain," which, in turn, signifies Mount Hiei.

monks search for the missing boy and eventually locate him. It is decided that Gen'i will accompany the *chigo* back to Nara. He does so and meets Tokugō, who agrees that the two should live together on Mount Hiei.

Preparations are being made for the boy's departure when his evil stepmother (the father's first wife, the *chigo*'s mother, is dead), a former serving woman, succumbs to her feelings of envy and cuts off the *chigo*'s long hair while he is sleeping. The departure is cancelled and the forlorn *chigo* secretly runs away to Mount Kumano. Gen'i and Tokugō are devastated. Gen'i falls ill and various shamans are called; a *yamabushi* healer comes to help, bringing with him a young assistant, who turns out to be the *chigo*. Jijū recovers upon being reunited with his beloved, and the two complete their move to Hiei.

After a few years of living with Gen'i, the *chigo* (who now is known as His Lordship the Junior Captain, *Shōshō no kimi*) decides to see his aging father and returns to Nara with Gen'i. Before they arrive, however, the stepmother engages her son-in-law, Raikan (the husband of her daughter by an unknown man), to murder her stepson, who she claims is coming to drive them all out. Gen'i gets wind of the plan, marshals the monks he has brought from Hiei, and routs the band of brigands assembled by Raikan, whose head is taken by Gen'i himself.

Battle between Hiei and the monks of Nara (Raikan was a monk at one of the temples in Nara) is averted through the intercession of Tokugō, who explains to the Nara monks why one of their own was killed by a priest from Hiei. The tension between Hiei and Nara had already been touched upon by Gen'i and the *chigo* early in their relationship.

Tokugō drives out the stepmother, her daughter, and their servant. The *chigo* (now known as the Zen monk) inherits the temple that his old teacher had owned; Gen'i also inherits his teacher's property. Years pass as the pair win rank and fame through their skills and learning.

Then Gen'i visits his father while the latter is dying, and the father warns him against seeking fame and glory. After his father's death, Gen'i retires to Ōhara and later Mount Kōya. There he meets an aged recluse, who turns out to be the Zen monk and former *chigo*. The two spend some time together, and each eventually passes away onto the Pure Land. The story concludes with the moral that riches and fame, including the desire for advancement in the clerical hierarchy, are transient and unworthy of pursuit.

"The Mountain" shares in common with "A Long Tale for an Autumn Night" the standard plot element of a monk and a *chigo* from rival temples. To that is added the evil stepmother, with a twist: Her victim is her stepson, not her stepdaughter. In many ways, the *chigo* of "The Mountain" functions as a female character; for example, when preparations are being made for his move to Hiei, the atmosphere is one of a household getting ready for a wedding. Even the stepmother's act of violence against the *chigo*—cutting off his hair—is aimed at his feminine beauty (not his manly honor, symbolized as a topknot; a *chigo* wore

his hair in a long ponytail stretching to his waist). It is clear from the story's final lesson, and by the depiction of the Hiei monks as stalwart and virtuous in contrast to their Nara counterparts, that the primary audience of "The Mountain" was the monks of Hiei. To this audience, no attempt is made to justify the *chigo* system by claiming that he is actually the manifestation of a bodhisattva; indeed, the relationship between Gen'i and his *chigo* is wholeheartedly approved of by their parents and teachers.

PILLOW BOY, CHRYSANTHEMUM BOY

The themes, motifs, and plots of *chigo* tales crystallize in noh drama. While there are numerous noh plays in which the main character is a teenage boy, or in which an adult male is portrayed by a boy actor, the figure of the *chigo* is addressed most directly in the play known as *Kiku jidō* (Chrysanthemum Boy) in the Kanze school of noh acting and as *Makura jidō* (Pillow Boy) in the others.

An envoy from the Chinese emperor Wen of Wei is sent to locate the source of a spring at the base of Mount Li-xian that is said to emit medicinal waters.⁵ Arriving at the mountain with two servants, the envoy encounters an odd-looking boy who states that he once attended King Mu of Zhou.⁶ This makes the envoy suspicious; King Mu had ruled several hundred years earlier. But, as proof, the boy shows him a gift from King Mu: a pillow with Buddhist verses inscribed upon it. The boy had copied the verses onto the leaves of chrysanthemums growing nearby, and the dew that dripped from them became the elixir of eternal life that the envoy has been searching for. The boy imbibes this elixir, playfully feigning drunkenness, and dances for the envoy. Then he returns to his mountain hut, and the envoy, we may presume, returns to the capital with the elixir for the emperor.⁷

This is the version of the story as it is performed today. It seems incomplete and fragmentary because it is actually an abridgement of an older play. The older play depicted in its first act the boy's journey into exile at Mount Li-xian, his punishment for the crime of stepping over King Mu's pillow. The officers escorting the boy stop at one side of a bridge deep in the mountains, send the boy over to the other side, and cut the bridge away, abandoning him to die there.

No one has been identified as the author of *Chrysanthemum Boy* or its variants; the earliest recorded performance of the play took place in 1534 (Takemoto

⁵Emperor Wen (Wen Di, 187–226) was the first emperor of the Wei dynasty, which lasted from 220 to 265. He ruled from 220 to 226.

⁶King Mu (Mu Wang, r. 1002 BCE–947 BCE) was the fifth monarch of the Zhou dynasty, which lasted from 1100 BCE to 256 BCE.

⁷For an English translation of this play, see Paul S. Atkins (1998).

1985, 23). The story is derived from the following anecdote included in the fourteenth-century military epic *Taiheiki*:

Long ago during the time of King Mu of Zhou, there appeared eight heavenly horses named Ji, Dao, Li, Hua, Liu, Lu, Er, and Si. King Mu mounted them and rode them to the ends of the earth. In India once he crossed a mountain river 100,000 miles wide and reached the country of Srāvastī in central India. At the time the Buddha was preaching the *Lotus Sūtra* on Vulture Peak. King Mu dismounted and went to where the audience was, bowed to the Buddha, withdrew to one side, and took a seat. The Buddha asked him, "What country are you from?" King Mu answered, "I am king of China." The Buddha then said, "It is well you have come to this gathering place now. I have a teaching for ruling nations. Would you like to learn it?" King Mu said, "I wish to perform the virtuous deed of fulfilling my duties, ruling the people, and pacifying the nation." Then the Buddha, using the Chinese language, bestowed upon King Mu eight verses from the four essential chapters [of the *Lotus Sūtra*]. They were what are now known as the esoteric passages that distill the teachings and rules of the *Lotus*. After his return to China, King Mu held them secret deep in his heart and did not transmit them to others.

Around this time there was a young lad called Ci-tong, of whom King Mu was particularly fond; therefore he remained in constant attendance upon the sovereign. Once Ci-tong was passing by his lord's vacant seat when he mistakenly stepped over the royal pillow. The vassals conferred and reported to the sovereign, "Upon consideration of precedent, [it is clear that] this is no minor offense. Nevertheless, as it occurred as a result of an error, the penalty of death shall be commuted one degree, to distant exile." The vassals had no choice but to exile Ci-tong to a place called Li-xian, deep in the mountains.

This Li-xian was 300 miles from the royal castle, deep in the mountains where even birds did not cry; clouds loomed darkly and tigers and wolves ran rampant. If one were to enter this mountain, there was no chance of coming back alive. King Mu felt pity for Ci-tong and, taking two verses from the "Broad Gate Chapter" of the *Lotus Sūtra*, secretly bestowed them on Ci-tong, telling him, "Every morning, bow once to each of the ten directions, and recite these verses." Then Ci-tong was exiled to Li-xian, abandoned at the bottom of a deep valley in the mountains. Here Ci-tong, in obedience to the kind command, recited these verses once every morning. But he worried that he would forget them, so he wrote out the passages on the lower leaves of chrysanthemums growing nearby. When dew forming on the leaves of these chrysanthemums trickled into the river that ran through the valley, all of the water became a magical heavenly elixir. Struck by thirst, Ci-tong drank; the water tasted like ambrosia and better than a hundred delicacies.

Moreover, heavenly beings came to offer him flowers, and since gods and demons folded their arms to render service to him, he lost his fear of wild beasts such as the tigers and wolves, and his body changed into that of a wizard. Furthermore, of more than 300 households of people who drank the valley water downstream, all were cured of their illnesses and lived to be 100 years old without aging.

The times passed, and after more than 800 years Ci-tong still looked like a boy, and showed no signs of aging. During the reign of Emperor Wen of Wei, he changed his name to Peng-zu, and offered this magic to Emperor Wen. Emperor Wen received it and was given a chrysanthemum cup and a blessing for 10,000 years of life. This corresponds today to the banquet held on the ninth day of the ninth month.

Since then, whenever a crown prince receives the throne from heaven, he first learns these verses. Therefore the “Broad Gate Chapter” should be called the king of all sūtras. This text was transmitted to our realm, and generations of virtuous sovereigns have learned it on the day of their enthronement. When a young sovereign is installed, the regent first receives the verses and makes sure to transmit them to the sovereign upon the commencement of his reign. These eight verses passed through three countries to become a means of ruling the nation and pacifying the people, an essential method for avoiding disaster and bringing about joy.

This is all the result of King Mu’s heavenly horses. Therefore the arrival of these “dragon horses” is absolutely a sign of prosperity for the Buddhist way and for the royal way, and of great longevity for the throne. (Gotō and Kamada 1961, 13–15; author’s translation)

At this point, the reader might expect to be informed of the antecedent Chinese texts in which the story of Ci-tong and King Mu appears. There is none. Rather, as Itō Masayoshi was the first to show, this tale appears to have been created by Japanese Tendai monks in order to explain the use of certain Buddhist elements—mudrās and chanted verses from the *Lotus Sūtra*—in imperial accession ceremonies.⁸

Itō cites in its entirety the text *Tendai-kata no gosokui hō* (Tendai Methods for Conducting Accession Ceremonies), whose colophon states that it was copied by Shun’yū, aged twenty-nine, concluding on Shōchō 2.3.17 (1429).⁹ It provides details found in the play but not in the *Taiheiki* or *Sangoku denki* versions of the tale. In the *Taiheiki*, the *jidō* legend is appropriated to explain

⁸See Itō Masayoshi (1980). Itō’s discovery was further extended and amplified by Abe Yasurō (1984a, 1984b).

⁹Shun’yū was a student of Dōshō, a monk who was also a priest at the Ise Shrine; the two are known for producing copies of the Shinto classics and commentaries. See Abe (1998, 200).

an omen; in the Tendai text, it explains why these verses from the *Lotus Sūtra* are transmitted to a crown prince upon ascending the throne.

The significance of Itō's discovery is that it locates the Tendai Buddhist monks (with deep interests in the ties between Shinto and Buddhist beliefs) as the originators and creators of the *jidō* legends. It seems fair to speculate that the verses were part of the accession ritual before the *jidō* legend was created in order to justify their inclusion. The earliest verifiable instance of an emperor performing this ritual (also called the *sokui kanjō*, or accession initiation) dates to 1288 (Kamikawa 1990, 251).

The implications of the equivalences are intriguing. In the *jidō* legend, the youth is the beloved of the Chinese king. He transgresses the law and is exiled by the king's ministers. To protect him, the king breaks his own obligation to keep the verses secret and shares them with the boy. Not only is the boy's life saved, but also the villagers downstream from him enjoy long life, and he is able to return the verses to the reigning emperor centuries later, after they have been lost.

It is clear that the *jidō* of the legend and the *chigo* of the *chigo* tales (and of real life) are the same figure. They differ, however, insofar as the *jidō* retains his youthful beauty forever, in contrast to the destiny of the *chigo*. Perhaps here we find a monk's deepest wish granted: that the youth who enlivens his banquet and warms his bed stay young forever. We also see another familiar theme from the *chigo* tales: a beautiful youth placed in harm's way. In the *jidō* legend, the *Lotus Sūtra* enables the boy's hero lover to protect him, even though they are many miles apart. King Mu is both a secular sovereign and a Buddhist adept, but it is his personal transmission from the Buddha himself that allows him to protect the youth from the punishment doled out by his secular ministers.

What are we to make of the implicit equivalences? In the *jidō* legend, the Buddha transmits eight verses to King Mu, who gives two to the boy, who, in turn, returns the verses to a later emperor. Are we to assume that the Japanese emperor inherits them from the later (Chinese) emperor? Or are we to infer a separate transmission? In that case, is not the person who transmits the verses and *mudrā* to the crown prince before he becomes emperor—a high-ranking Tendai monk or imperial regent—equivalent to King Mu, and the crown prince equivalent to the *jidō*? Or should we regard the transmitter as the Buddha, and the crown prince as King Mu?

Kamikawa Michio emphasizes the agency of the crown prince in performing the accession ritual and says that the new emperor is an incarnation of the buddha Dainichi Nyorai, outside of and superior to the Buddhist clerical hierarchy. He references Western equivalents, namely, medieval ceremonies in which secular kings were anointed with oil by popes, which undermined the king's authority. What he really seems to be saying is that, like Napoleon, the medieval Japanese emperor crowned himself. Kamikawa stresses that "it was the emperor alone who performed the rite, and the regent's role was limited

to transmitting the *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī*" (1990, 271) in an attempt to reject the assumption that the regent played an active role in the accession ritual. But when we view the ritual through the lens of the *jidō* legend, the simple act of transmitting the secret items to the emperor puts the transmitter in a position of higher status than the receiver, unless the transmitter is equivalent to the *chigo* and the crown prince equivalent to the later Chinese emperor. Moreover, as Kamikawa notes (1990, 271), the transmission was originally conducted not by the regent but by a high-ranking monk. The monks' creation of the *jidō* legend is really quite astute. By placing the emphasis on transmission, they ensure their importance even if the regents supplant them in conducting the ritual (which they did). The rivalry between the aristocrats (centered upon the regent) and the clerical authorities for proximity to the emperor is one of Kamikawa's themes, and it is hard to get much closer than the accession ritual.

If we read more closely into the *jidō* legend, we see the tension between the regents and the abbots manifested in the unsympathetic portrayal of Mu's ministers. The supreme figure in the story is the Buddha himself, to whom King Mu is subordinate. We may be inclined to believe that the new Japanese emperor is equivalent to King Mu, and he is—but only after the accession ritual. As crown prince, he is the *jidō* who receives the verses to protect him from the ministers; he is the beloved *chigo* of the Tendai monks. Thus, the Buddhist clergy inscribed the figure of the *chigo* into the historical record, and by implicitly associating the *chigo* with the new emperor (via the *jidō*), they kept a place for themselves close to the center of imperial prestige and, at the same time, continued an ongoing project, also seen in the *chigo* tales, of increasing the legitimacy of the *chigo* system.

YANG GUIFEI

Now that we have grasped the origins of the *jidō* story, it may be helpful to broaden our view and think comparatively in order to understand the function of the *jidō* in its context. Specifically, there are striking similarities between the *jidō* legend and the story of the Tang imperial consort Yang Guifei (719–56), a historical figure who was immortalized in the lines of Bo Juyi's "Song of Everlasting Sorrow" (*Chang hen ge*).

As told by the poet, the Tang emperor Xuanzong (685–762; r. 712–56) becomes infatuated with a young daughter of the Yang family, a girl of extraordinary beauty raised far from the eyes of men. (According to "An Account of 'The Song of Everlasting Sorrow'" [*Chang hen ge chuan*], a companion narrative by Bo's friend Chen Hong, she had already been admitted to the imperial harem, which included thousands of other women, and become the wife of an imperial prince before her husband's father discovered her and took her for himself.) Enthralled by her beauty, the emperor wants nothing to do with the other women in the harem and stops attending court, too tired from nights of lovemaking. Eventually, many of the Yang clan are

assigned to official posts as a result of the influence of the emperor's favorite concubine, called Yang Guifei, or "Yang the Prized Consort." This neglect of official affairs gradually takes its toll: An Lushan (705–57), Yang Guifei's adopted son, rises up in revolt and forces the emperor to abandon the capital with his entourage, escorted by loyal troops. At the Ma-wei post station, the troops demand the death of Yang Guifei, who is strangled on the spot. The loyalist cause eventually triumphs, crushing the rebellion, but the emperor is not to be consoled. He consults a Taoist wizard, who manages to locate Yang Guifei at Peng-lai, the island of the immortals. She, too, has been plunged into grief but gives the wizard some mementos as proof that he has found her. She also divulges in the way of evidence a secret vow she and the emperor made.¹⁰

The similarities between Yang Guifei and the *jidō* are readily discerned. In each case, a Chinese sovereign is captivated by the beauty and charms of a favorite, who causes him to neglect his official duties. Those surrounding the sovereign, upon whom he relies for assistance, demand the removal of the enchanting favorite, and the sovereign has no choice but to comply. The beloved becomes a semi-divine figure.

Of course there are differences, too—the *jidō* suffers exile and lives youthfully ever after, whereas Yang Guifei is violently murdered, leaving the emperor obsessively distraught. (I find the difference in gender almost irrelevant; more important is the difference in age between the lover and beloved. Yang Guifei was thirty-four years younger than Emperor Xuanzong.) The story of Yang Guifei would make a good *chigo* tale with a few alterations. Indeed, Bo Juyi was extremely popular in pre-modern Japan, and "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow" was the most famous of his works. It inspired the fifteenth-century noh play *Yang Guifei* (*Yōkihi*) and is referred to or alluded to in countless works of poetry and narrative.¹¹

In the *jidō* legend, the *jidō*'s crime is that of effacing the boundary between sovereign and subject by stepping over the king's pillow. But what enables such an act to take place is the king's excessive fondness for the youth. This is also the message of the story of Yang Guifei. In Japan, during the period in which retired emperors wielded great power, it was common for them to bestow lavish political favors upon young male favorites (Gomi 1984, 416–41). One such example is the relationship between the retired emperor Go-Shirakawa (1127–92) and the courtier Fujiwara no Nobuyori (1133–59). The Tendai abbot Jien wrote that Go-Shirakawa was "shockingly fond" of Nobuyori.¹² *The Tale of the Heiji Era* (*Heiji monogatari*) criticizes Nobuyori for unseemly behavior, saying that he "even exceeded Mi Tzu-hsia and went beyond An Lu-shan. He feared not the

¹⁰Translations of *Chang hen ge* and *Chang hen ge chuan* may be found in Stephen Owen (1996, 442–52). The poem appears in the fourth book of "Laments" (*ganshang*) in Bo's collected works.

¹¹For an overview of the reception of *Chang hen ge* in Japan, see Shinma Kazuyoshi (1993). See also Masako Nakagawa Graham (1998). On *Yōkihi*, see Atkins (2006, 165–74).

¹²The quote is from Jien's classic historical work *Gukanshō* (Brown and Ishida 1979, 106).

‘crime of [offering] the remainder of a peach.’”¹³ The reference alludes to a passage in the Chinese classic *Han Feizi* in which the presumptuous Mi Zixia enjoys the favor and indulgence of Duke Ling of Wei, even going so far as to borrow his carriage and offer him a half-eaten peach.¹⁴ At first the duke pardons such affronts, but later, as Zixia’s beauty fades, they are summoned as examples of his arrogance. Eventually Nobuyori’s rival, Shinzei (Fujiwara no Michinori, d. 1159), attempts to remonstrate with Go-Shirakawa by presenting him with three scrolls of text and a picture of An Lushan in order to demonstrate how arrogance leads to ruin (Nagazumi and Shimada 1967, 192). But Go-Shirakawa’s affection for Nobuyori is said to have increased all the more. (Eventually Nobuyori and Shinzei faced off with military backing in the Heiji Rebellion; Nobuyori was taken prisoner and executed, and Shinzei killed himself in order to evade capture.) In my view, Shinzei saw Nobuyori as An Lushan and Yang Guifei rolled into one: the minister who manipulated the emperor’s affections for his own political benefit.

In some of the *chigo* tales, the *chigo* is revealed in the end as an avatar of some supernatural being, most often the bodhisattva Kannon. Yang Guifei was regarded in medieval Japan as a Taoist immortal who took human form temporarily to console Emperor Xuanzong, whose favorite consort had died shortly before he met Yang Guifei (Wang 1994). Moreover, the Shingon temple Sennyūji of Kyoto includes among its treasures a statue that is said to be Kannon in the form of Yang Guifei. It was brought back from Song China by the monk Tankai in 1230 (Konno 1990, 238, 250). Like the dead *chigo*, Yang was sent to the human realm for a reason.

By juxtaposing the story of Yang Guifei against the *jidō* legends and *chigo* tales, we can see a larger pattern emerge. Both Yang Guifei and the *jidō* are scapegoat figures, singled out for punishment because the real culprit—the emperor or king who permitted his affections to interfere with the governance of the realm—is beyond reproach. The comparative approach thus leads us to an anthropological one in which the *chigo* tales and *jidō* legend shed light not only upon the cultural systems of medieval Japan but also on human nature and its expression through creative discourse. For example, the enigma of why the *jidō*’s stepping over King Mu’s pillow was regarded as such a grave offense is unraveled when we recognize that stepping over certain objects has been regarded as taboo in many cultures (Frazer 1951, 423–25). James Frazer, in his classic work *The Golden Bough*, devotes an entire volume to taboo; the *jidō* legends should be viewed in the context of this broader system of prohibition and transgression.

¹³Translation by Edwin O. Reischauer in Reischauer and Joseph K. Yamagiwa (1972, 293). For the original, see Nagazumi Yasuaki and Shimada Isao (1967, 190, 328 n. 7).

¹⁴For a translation, see Burton Watson (1964, 78). The original may be found in Takeuchi Teruo (1960, 152–53).

SCAPEGOAT THEORY

So often, as in the case of Oedipus, the violator of a taboo (incest and patricide) is subjected to punishment (exile). But in the scapegoat theory of René Girard, in many cases the purported transgressor is an innocent victim who is falsely accused. For the remainder of this essay, I would like to attempt a reading of the *chigo*, *jidō*, and similar narratives informed in part by Girard's thought, as outlined in his groundbreaking study *Violence and the Sacred* (1977) and amplified in *The Scapegoat* (1986). To begin with the conclusion, I propose that the archetypal resonances of these narratives, which tantalize us with hidden meanings and symbolism, may be partially unraveled by considering the *chigo*, the *jidō*, and Yang Guifei as sacrificial figures or scapegoats. That is to say, they are specially selected as surrogate victims of socially sanctioned violence whose role is to deflect or absorb violence that would otherwise tear apart the community. Girard states that the purpose of sacrifice is "to restore harmony to the community, to reinforce the social fabric," suppressing various kinds of "internal violence" (1977, 8).

In Girard's view, violence arises not because of difference but because of similarity. Competitors come into conflict because they both desire the same thing: "Order, peace, and fecundity depend on cultural distinctions; it is not these distinctions but the loss of them that gives birth to fierce rivalries and sets members of the same family or social group at one another's throats" (1977, 49). This desire is typically mimetic, which is to say, it is motivated not by the intrinsic worth or attractiveness of the thing or person desired but by the simple fact that the other party desires it. This leads to violence, which propagates itself through the imitation of reprisals in an eternal cycle.

Modern societies have legal systems that assert a monopoly upon the use of violence to settle disputes, but primitive societies, including ancient Western cultures, relied on sacrificial violence. According to Girard, analysis of numerous mythical and literary texts (his main sources are ancient Greek drama and mythology, the Old and New Testaments, Shakespeare, and ethnological reports) shows that time and time again, an innocent victim was selected and subjected to an act of collective violence, after which the communal crisis subsided. In Girard's words,

Each time an oral or written testament mentions an act of violence that is directly or indirectly collective we question whether it includes the description of a social or cultural crisis, that is, a generalized loss of differences (the first stereotype), crimes that "eliminate differences" (the second stereotype), and whether the identified authors of these crimes possess the marks that suggest a victim, the paradoxical marks of the absence of difference (the third stereotype). The fourth stereotype is violence itself, which will be discussed later.

The juxtaposition of more than one stereotype within a single document indicates persecution. Not all the stereotypes must be present:

three are enough and often even two. Their existence convinces us that (1) the acts of violence are real; (2) the crisis is real; (3) the victims are chosen not for the crimes they are accused of but for the victim's signs that they bear, for everything that suggests their guilty relationship with the crisis; and (4) the import of the operation is to lay the responsibility for the crisis on the victims and to exert an influence on it by destroying these victims or at least by banishing them from the community they "pollute." (1986, 24)

Previous work on the *chigo* and *jidō* has hinted at such an approach. Faure recounts the tale of one *chigo* who drowns himself in a pond after being separated from his master; the *chigo* is later venerated as an avatar of Monju. Faure calls it "a suicide turned into sacrifice, a kind of Girardian scapegoat" and aptly asks, "Does not their divinization perhaps simply reflect the fact that they served as victims?" (1998, 274). Even before Faure, Abe Yasurō recognized the role of the *jidō* as scapegoat. He cites other versions of the *jidō* legend in which it is the first Qin emperor, not King Mu, who "puts aside the empress" and becomes infatuated with his boy attendant. As a result, the boy abandons all show of deference to courtiers and ministers, incurring the disapproval of the emperor's subjects. The destruction of the order of the state by "sexual debauchery" reaches its climax when the boy steps over (or, in some versions, breaks) the emperor's pillow. "Then the boy takes the blame for the crime of causing the confusion of the normal order described above, and is exiled to Mt. Li-xian as a so-called 'lamb of atonement' (*shokuzai no hitsuji*)" (Abe 1984b, 51–52; author's translation). At this point, Abe heads off on a different track, recalling that the very act that saves the boy and guarantees a happy ending—the granting of secret verses to him that were reserved for the exclusive use of the sovereign—is itself the violation of another prerogative (the Buddha's). To Abe, this is another manifestation of Tendai *hongakuron* (theories on innate enlightenment), in which good and evil are false categories.

It takes little imagination to see that the *jidō* is, in fact, a substitute victim. The ministers cannot depose the emperor, so they use the legal system to subject his beloved favorite to severe punishment. The same is true of Yang Guifei: Her death is the penalty that Xuanzong pays for having neglected his duties. In the *jidō* legend, it is not the return of the verses to the latter sovereign that restores order but the exile of the *jidō* himself. In the story of Yang Guifei especially, there is an actual crisis—the rebellion of An Lushan—that precipitates the execution of Yang Guifei, who is singled out for all the problems that have beset the realm. She is physically distinguished by her extreme beauty.

But how might the protagonists of the *chigo* tales, or the *chigo* who populate historical records, have functioned as surrogate victims? First, they functioned as sexual surrogates for women, whose presence inside a monastic community would have been regarded as polluting, raised suspicion among the laity, and led to internal conflict. Indeed, as Girard notes, "Like violence, sexual desire tends

to fasten upon surrogate objects if the object to which it was originally attracted remains inaccessible; it willingly accepts substitutes" (1977, 35).

Are the *chigo* really surrogate victims of violence? And, if so, what is the original target of that violence? It does seem that the *chigo* leads an abnormally imperiled existence. In the three tales I have summarized here, the *chigo* are caught up in violence between other parties. Specifically, the *chigo* of "A Long Tale for an Autumn Night" gets caught up in the real battles between the monks of Hiei and Miidera. When he disappears, the monks of Miidera immediately suspect that Hiei has been involved; interestingly, they first attack the boy's father, and then they build an ordination platform to provoke Hiei; they are aware that a direct attack on Hiei would be futile. Neither the Miidera monks nor the Hiei monks attack the *chigo*, but his suicide is a collateral result of the destruction of his temple. Like the destruction of the temple, the death of the *chigo* is cited as a blessing in disguise that leads others to form karmic links with the Buddhist teachings. After receiving the teaching of Shinra Daimyōjin in a dream, the Miidera monks are persuaded not to seek retaliation; Hiei's actions are not a slight to be repaid but part of a broader divine plan. The *chigo*'s suicide, which is precipitated by his feelings of guilt at having contributed to the conflict that led to the destruction of Miidera, is reinterpreted and thereby ends the cycle of violence. As for the four stereotypes, we have a crisis in the ongoing rivalry between Hiei and Miidera, a victim who is physically distinctive, and perhaps an act of collective violence (one wonders whether the kidnapping of the *chigo* was real, and the suicide not—that is to say, could the *chigo* have been abducted and murdered by the monks of Hiei?). The *chigo* is not accused, however, of any crime.

In "The Tale of Genmu," the *chigo*'s father is killed by a rival; the *chigo* participates in the cycle of violence by avenging the murder and is then murdered himself. The cycle, however, stops there, for the *chigo* has no heir to avenge him. His murderer meets the *chigo*'s distraught lover, and the two pursue their devotions together. Here also, the unnatural death of the *chigo* plays an important role in reconciling enemies and ending the cycle of retribution. It is precisely because he is a manifestation of a bodhisattva that his death need not (and must not) be avenged. The posthumous deification of the *chigo* enables a cessation of cyclical violence. In this tale we have no general crisis, nor an act of collective violence, but we do have a physically distinctive victim who is killed (after killing his father's killer).

In "The Mountain," the *chigo* dies a natural death in the end. During his lifetime, however, he is subjected to violence by his stepmother: First she cuts off his hair, which brings about his self-exile to Kumano. Then she sends her son-in-law, the monk Raikan, to kill the former *chigo*, but Raikan is himself killed in the process, the stepmother's plot is discovered, and she and her daughter are expelled. What is most interesting about the stepmother's method is her targeting of the *chigo*'s hair—the aspect of his appearance that makes him most like her own daughter. By cutting his hair, she differentiates him from her daughter and temporarily avoids a conflict. When the *chigo* returns later as an adult male, Raikan, the

stepmother's son-in-law, is sent to kill him. Raikan and Gen'i, the former *chigo*'s lover, meet in mortal combat, mirror images of each other. Raikan is the husband of the stepmother's daughter, Gen'i the "husband" of the minister's son. Later, when Gen'i kills Raikan, precautions must be taken to allay the wrath of the Nara monks, lest they rise up in defense of one of their own. The specter of violence between the Hiei and Nara monks hovers in the background of "The Mountain"; fortunately, it is never realized, perhaps because of the role of the two lovers as buffers between the two sides. In fact, it could be argued that in "The Mountain," the sacrificial victim is not the *chigo* but the stepmother. Of low birth, she is accused of transgressive acts (cutting the *chigo*'s hair, plotting to murder her stepson) and later expelled from the community, an act that restores order and ends the internal violence. (This is not accomplished by the death of Raikan; it is the stepmother's envy of the *chigo* that causes the crisis.)

In the *jidō* legend, the youth is a surrogate victim for the emperor. On the other hand, in the *chigo* tales, the *chigo*'s function is often to "absorb" violence in order to prevent its spread between families or rival temples. As a liminal figure—neither child nor adult, neither male nor female—the *chigo* is exquisitely positioned as a victim. Girard's remarks on the role of women as sacrificial victims seem equally apt in the case of the *chigo*: "Like the animal and the infant, but to a lesser degree, the woman qualifies for sacrificial status by reason of her weakness and relatively marginal social status. That is why she can be viewed as a quasi-sacred figure, both desired and disdained, alternately elevated and abused" (1977, 141–42). The paradox of the *chigo* being subjected to violence and, at the same time, deified in the *chigo* tales, or being fêted and simultaneously used to satisfy forbidden sexual desires in real life, turns out not to be no paradox at all. He is a sacred victim who in fiction converts violence into divine will and in the abbot's bedchamber converts the violation of monastic precepts against sexual contact into sublime ritual and communion with the sacred.

CONCLUSION

In the end, how are we to read the *chigo* tales? Are they a "euphemization of exploitation through a mystical discourse" and possibly "a rather crude ideological cover-up for a kind of institutionalized prostitution or rape," as Faure contends? (1998, 275, 265). Do they illustrate the nonduality of good and evil, as Abe suggests? Or, as Childs claims, is the entire genre category itself suspect, "the result of a modern view of homosexuality as an aberrant behavior" that "ignores the prominence of the religious awakening aspect" (1991, 26) of the tales?¹⁵

¹⁵I define *chigo monogatari* as tales in which *chigo* play a major role and include in my list above "The New Servant Is a *Chigo*," in which the *chigo*'s love interest is female. Other interpretations of the *chigo* tales include the view of Richard K. Payne (1999) that "A Long Tale for an Autumn Night" portrays a midlife transition that is culturally universal.

My focus in this essay has been not on the *chigo* as demigods or as sex toys (which is not to say that *chigo* did not fulfill these functions) but as victims of real and imagined violence, whether carried out by others or by themselves. By expanding *chigo* discourse to include the *jidō* legends and literary accounts of Yang Guifei, we may observe that the role of the *chigo* may have been to absorb violence and to restore harmony to the community, which is generally consonant with the function of the surrogate sacrificial victim in Girard's theory of collective violence. Taking a hint from Girard's association of sexuality with violence (1977, 34–36), should we perhaps then conclude that the historical role of the *chigo* as a focus of erotic attention was to absorb the sexual desires of their clerical masters so that they would not be directed externally (toward women) or internally (against each other)?

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