Reflections on a Buddhist Scene in *The Tale of Genji*
*Remarques sur une scène bouddhique du Roman du Genji*

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EDITOR’S NOTE

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1 That one as unacquainted with Japanese literature as myself should be participating in a symposium on *The Tale of Genji* calls for some explanation, if not an apology. As Kūkai writes at the beginning of his *Indications of the Goals of the Three Teachings*, “A man writes when moved.” In my own case, I was moved—after having made a cursory reading of the *Genji monogatari* in the *Iwanami Banko* edition, edited by the great scholar Yamagishi Tokuhei—to astonishment on discovering numerous, subtle Buddhist allusions embedded in the text. This suggests that a Buddhist dimension must be considered in interpreting the work.

2 I will attempt to demonstrate, using a specific example that has apparently not yet been interpreted in this light, that acknowledging the role of Buddhist texts in the *Genji* yields a more accurate understanding of certain significant episodes.

3 The passage under consideration appears in Chapter 5, “Wakamurasaki” (Lavender). The opening section of this chapter abounds in references to Buddhism and its texts, and many expressions in the chapter text are familiar to students of Buddhism. A brief summary of the first part of the chapter follows. The story is set in one of the “northern hills” (*kitayama*) located just beyond the limits of the capital. Prince Genji
has been advised to go there to be cured of a “high fever” (warawa-yami) by the conjurations of a “practitioner” (okonaibito) who is reputed to be highly efficacious. Because the holy man (hijiri) has asserted that he is now too old to leave his hermitage (muro) far from the outside world (yaya fukau iru tokoro narikeri), the Prince must go into the hills; he does so along with four or five close companions (mutsumashiki yotari-itsutari). It is late in the Third Month: though the season for cherry blossoms has ended in the capital, the mountain cherries are in full bloom. The countryside, lost in mist (kasumi), seems to make a deep impression on the Prince, who usually lives in a highly restricted environment (tokoroseki onmi nite, medurashō obosarekeri). The visitors are also greatly moved (ito aware nari) by the hermitage, here called a tera: the holy man lives on a high peak (mine takaku), in a cave in the living rock (fukaki iwa no naka ni zo). Genji’s shabby traveling clothes (ito itau yatsure-tamaeredo) do not deceive the hermit, who realizes that he has an eminent visitor. He is, however, surprised by the visit, since he no longer concerns himself with worldly matters and so has forgotten his magical practices (ima ha kono yo no koto wo omoi-tamaeneba, gengata no okonai mo sute-wasurete haberu wo ikade kau owasimatisuramu). Nevertheless, he agrees to carry out the healing rituals.

During the preparations for the rite the Prince leaves the cave and sees, from his high vantage point, monastic residences (sōbō) located on a lower level. Genji wonders who lives in one of the dwellings, which has “halls and galleries… nicely disposed and… fine trees in the garden.” One of Genji’s companions tells him that it is the house of a bishop (sōzu) who has lived there in seclusion for the last two years. Genji’s attention is attracted by the sight of girls busy at tasks in the garden, and he goes down for a closer look. This is how the story of his encounter with Murasaki begins.

This opening section is studded with unmistakable references to Buddhist concepts, expressed in quite accurate terms. Note the somewhat unreal atmosphere of the initial scene: the mist, the high peak, the hermit’s cave in the rock, and the peculiar perspective. Lying below this otherworldly site is a temple where a monk lives in seclusion with his relatives. This sphere has three levels: the capital, home of the Prince, who represents the worldly dimension; the ethereal level of the hermitage, his initial destination; and a middle level which is both a place of religious devotion and a locus of feminine temptation. The author, with some irony, draws our attention to the latter element: one of Genji’s attendants exclaims, “There are women down there!” and shortly afterward, having been told the story of the former governor of Akashi, the Prince asks, “And his daughter?” [NKBT 14, pp. 179 and 181]. Genji descends from the upper level to the middle one, which will serve as a setting for flirtations carried out against a Buddhist backdrop.

In this setting, appropriately enough, Genji makes an ironic allusion to scripture: he is replying to a bewildered female attendant who, during the night he spends at the bishop’s house, addresses him from the darkness of a neighboring room. Genji responds, “One who is guided by the Enlightened One may enter into darkness but will never lose his way” (Hotoke no on-shirube wa kuraki ni irite mo sara ni tagaumajikanaru mono wo) [NKBT vol. 14, p. 192]. The famous poem by Murasaki Shikibu’s great rival, Izumi Shikibu, should be mentioned in this connection:

暗きより
Kuraki yori/Now from out the dark
暗き道にぞ
Kuraki michi ni zo/Into yet a darker path
入りぬべき
Irinu beki/I must enter:
Parenthetically, I find it symptomatic of the lack of attention accorded Buddhist subjects by Japanese literature specialists (a practice which I hope is now a thing of the past) that Yamagishi, in his notes to the NKBT edition, gives an erroneous location for the famous Lotus Sutra passage “From darkness proceeding to darkness, / They never hear the Buddha’s name.” Pace Yamagishi, the passage does not appear in Chapter 2, “Expedient Devices,” but in Chapter 7, “Parable of the Conjured City.” That said, the coincidence is striking: that two contemporary women writers, neither of whom known for her Buddhist erudition, should allude to the same Lotus passage eloquently expresses the degree to which the Heian mentality was permeated by a “Lotusian” culture (to borrow an adjective coined by Bernard Frank).

A clear, more significant reference to The Lotus Sutra appears well before Genji’s pseudo-quotation, however. We are told about the former governor of Akashi Province who, despite having withdrawn from the world, continues to cherish great plans for his daughter. He often says that if he dies before she achieves his ambitions for her, and if her destiny proves to be other than what he had conceived (moshi ware ni okurete sono kokorozashi togezu, kono omoi-okitsuru sukusetagawaba), then “she is to leap into the sea” (umi ni irine)! One of Genji’s companions laughingly elaborates on these words, using an image that would have immediately occurred to people of his time: “She must be a cherished maiden, destined to become a queen of the Dragon King of the Sea” (kairyūō no kisaki ni naru beki, itsuki-musume nanari). [NKBT, vol. 14, p. 181] The Prince is so pleased by his words that he promptly adopts the sea imagery: “What then does he intend by entering so deeply into thoughts of the sea-bottom? The seaweed in the depths/ people’s gaze will make things difficult” (nani-gokoro arite umi no soko made fukau omoi-iruran? soko no mirume mo mono-mutsukashū; the literal translation will facilitate identification of repeated vocabulary below). [NKBT, vol. 14, p. 182]

While well aware of the Buddhist, parodic nature of these remarks, Yamagishi is content to refer us to a sutra whose title seemingly justifies the identification: the Sutra of the Dragon King of the Sea (Kairyūōgyō). The words “Dragon King of the Sea” indeed appear not only in the sutra title but several times in its text, which was often recited in Nara during rainmaking ceremonies. This sutra also contains the compound ryūgo, or ryū no kisaki, as the Genji text has it. Finally, I regret to say that neither expression appears in The Lotus Sutra. Yet in reading these lines from the Genji, I cannot help but think that the author had the latter sutra in mind when she had her characters play with this image.

In a famous scene from Chapter 12 of the Lotus, “Devadatta” (Dai badatta-hon), the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī praises the daughter of the Dragon King (ryūōn) and concludes that she is capable of attaining enlightenment. Two prominent members of the assembly, the bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulation (Chishaku bosatsu) and the great, stern disciple ‘Śāriputra, express doubts, particularly on the likelihood of her achieving instantaneous enlightenment. The girl herself then appears from the bottom of the sea to demonstrate, in the sight of all, her immediate attainment of supreme enlightenment.

Two passages in this text demand our attention. First, Mañjuśrī, while describing to the Buddha the dragon girl’s many outstanding accomplishments as a practitioner of the Buddhist Way, declares that she has “profoundly entered into dhyāna-
concentration, and has arrived at an understanding of the dharmas.” The first verse, read in Japanese fukaku zenjō ni irite, is strangely reminiscent of the Prince’s playful fukau omoi-iruran, if zenjō (meditation, concentration) is replaced with a more ordinary term for the mental process, omou. When read in Sino-Japanese, the Sutra passage is essentially comprehensible in one hearing: no special learning is necessary. The episode was probably popular among court ladies, who would have enjoyed seeing a fellow female get the better of Sākyamuni’s most learned disciple.

Another “Devadatta” passage links little Murasaki to this Lotusian episode: the fact that the dragon girl has just turned eight years old (年始八歳, toshi hajimete hassai). The Genji author informs us that the young heroine of “Wakamurasaki” “is just ten years old” (tō bakari ni ya aramu). It is difficult to imagine the dragon queens in the Kairyū-gyō as girls: there are millions of them, and none is individualized. When Genji’s companions speak of a kisaki, they are imagining the Akashi lady’s future in the dragon king’s palace; but in terms of “age group,” young Murasaki is more comparable to the well known dragon girl in the Lotus. If these identifications are valid, then Murasaki and the Akashi lady, principal female characters appearing for the first time in this chapter, are connected from the start by a Lotusian link.

Let us now consider another likely allusion to the Lotus Sutra, this one embedded in the exchange of poetry among the Prince, the bishop, and the hermit. So extraordinary do the two monks find Genji—this meteor of urban life illuminating the anchorites’ hilly abode—that both recluses perceive his presence as an epiphany and express their feelings through religious imagery. The Prince is the first to offer a poem; the bishop’s composition continues Genji’s cherry blossom theme while introducing a different plant:

Having finally encountered, I believe, an udumbara flower, would I ever look again at the cherry blossoms? [NKBT 14:197]

The udumbara flower (udonge or udonbara in Sino-Japanese) has a mythical status in East Asia. Zhiyi (J. Chigi), the founder of the Tiantai (J. Tendai) school, explains that the plant blossoms every three thousand years to signal the coming of a world emperor. In fact, as Yamagishi observes, it is also a real tree, Ficus glomerata. This member of the fig family, true to the Chinese characters of its name, пустыровый, produces fruit but has no visible flowers. Yamagishi cites among his chief scriptural sources the Golden Light Sutra and the Lotus Sutra. In the Lotus, udonge is written 優曇華 rather than the 優 塔花 of the Genji, but the difference may not be relevant here since the bishop, unperturbed by the redundance, uses both “flower” characters in his locution, udonge no hana (優曇華の花, NKBT 14:197). The Lotus Sutra mentions the udumbara (Sino-Japanese udonge) in connection with exceptional people, as in Chapter 2, “Expedient Devices.”

And, as for one who can listen to this Dharma, Such a person, too, is rare. The udumbara flower, for example, Is loved and desired by all, Regarded as rare by both gods and men, Appearing only at great intervals of time. And, a few lines later in the same chapter:
Such a person is very rare,
Rarer even than the udumbara flower.\textsuperscript{17}

The comparison of an unusual person to the rare-blooming flower suggests that the \textit{Lotus} is the inspiration for the bishop’s poem, which by implication transfers to the Prince the identity of worthy auditor of the \textit{Sutra}.\textsuperscript{14}

Although I will not state unequivocally that the bishop’s poem refers to the \textit{Lotus}, the two prior examples discussed above would seem to lead in that direction. The case is strengthened when another element, more inclusive but easily overlooked, is added to these \textit{disjecta membra}. This element comprises the recitation of the \textit{Lotus Sutra} as performed in the ritual known as the \textit{Lotus Meditation} (or \textit{Samādhī; hokke-sannai}), a rite of repentance which, we are told in the novel, is carried out in a room of the same name: \textit{hokke-sannai okonau dō no senbō no koe yama-oroshi ni tsukite kikoe-kuru} (In the chapel where the \textit{Lotus Meditation} was being performed, the sound of voices raised in repentance came to his ears on the mountain winds; \textit{NKBT} 14:195-196). We do not know if the rite is being performed at the Prince’s request;\textsuperscript{18} it may simply be part of the bishop’s religious practice. In either case, the sound of the rite serves as background music on this night when the Prince is cured of his illness but is seized by a new passion. In giving us this detail, the author puts the entire passage into perspective: we are surrounded by the \textit{Lotus}. Even though Genji is told by the bishop that it is time for him to perform a ritual to the buddha Amida (\textit{Amida-butsu mono shi-tamau dō ni suru koto haberu koro ni namu}) [\textit{NKBT} 14:191], he later returns to participate in the poetry exchange.

Accompanied by these Lotusian psalmodies, I will examine the final poem of the exchange: my aim is to demonstrate that it clearly alludes to an episode from the \textit{Lotus Sutra}. To the best of my knowledge, the allusion has not heretofore been observed. After the bishop has presented his poem, it is the hermit’s turn to address Genji:

奥山の/\textit{Okayama no}/Waiting deep in the mountains,

松のとぼそを/\textit{matsu no toboso wo} /I open my pinewood door

まれにあけて/\textit{mare ni akete} /something rarely done

まだ見ぬ花の/\textit{mada minu hana no} /and behold a face of splendor

顔を見るかな/\textit{kao wo miru kana}/never before seen. [\textit{NKBT} 14:197]

The translation is pedestrian, but it attempts to translate each word. In the wake of Genji’s cherry blossoms and the bishop’s udumbara flower, the hermit would be expected to increase the hyperbole. He does compare Genji’s face to a splendid flower (the two meanings of the word \textit{hana}), which is something, but this seems to sidestep the momentum of the preceding poem; unless, that is, the hermit is adopting the bishop’s metaphor wholesale, which is not a satisfactory alternative. What imagery is implemented by the third participant?

I believe that the key word of this poem is “door.” The door, moreover, is made of pine (\textit{matsu}); and of course \textit{matsu} also means “to wait.” The hermit was probably not waiting specifically for Genji; yet we are told that the reclusive monks see Genji’s arrival as an epiphany (as the \textit{udumbara} flower comparison has already made clear), an epiphany marking the end of a period of waiting. An initial reading of the poem gives a fairly straightforward idea of the action suggested: the hermit opens his door and, on encountering the Prince, experiences surprise and emotion. But does the door open in what we automatically think of as the right direction, from inside to outside, from the hermitage to the world? Lacking much knowledge of the architecture of Heian hermitages, and given the dearth of doors in \textit{Genji monogatari} illustrations, we might
assume that such buildings had sliding doors. This view, however, is surely influenced by more recent structures, such as Bashō’s hermitage. The question remains, however: the hermit opens a door, but in which direction? Can a reader who initially thinks of the door as opening from the inside out imagine the opposite: that the hermit opens a door from the outside in order to look in?

A famous hierophany in *The Lotus Sutra* has been the source of endless iconography in China and Japan: the story of the Thus Come One Many Jewels (Tahō-nyorai, Skt. Prabhūtāratna), whose jeweled stupa rises out of the earth to rest suspended in midair. The scene is described in Chapter 11, “Apparition of the Jeweled Stupa,” (*Ken-hōtō-hon*). When a voice comes from the suspended stupa (or pagoda) praising ‘Sākyamuni and the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha tells the astonished assembly that it is the voice of a past Buddha from a distant world whose name is Many Jewels.

“Earlier, when that Buddha was treading the bodhisattva-path, he took a great vow: ‘If I achieve Buddhahood, and if, after my passage into extinction, in any of the lands of the ten directions there is a place in which the Scripture of the Dharma Blossom is preached, in order that that scripture may be heard, may my stupa-shrine well up before it and bear witness to it by praising it, saying ‘Excellent!’’”

Shortly after, the Buddha adds:

“[W]herever anyone preaches the Scripture of the Dharma Blossom, his jeweled stupa invariably wells up before that person, his whole body [zenshin, with zen meaning both ‘intact’ and ‘entire’] in the stupa giving praise with the words, ‘Excellent! Excellent!’”

The bodhisattva acting as spokesman for the assembly then declares to the Buddha, “World-Honored One! We pray, we wish to see this Buddha’s body.” After an impressive change of scene involving the restructuring of our world, the buddha ‘Sākyamuni also rises into space and, “with his right finger” (以右指, migi no yubi wo motte) he

... opened the door of the seven-jeweled stupa [開七寶塔戸, shippōto no to wo hirakityama], which made a great sound as of a bar being pushed aside to open the gate of a walled city [開大城門, daijō no mon wo hiraku]. At that very moment all the assembled multitude saw the Thus Come One Many Jewels in the jeweled stupa, seated on a lion throne, his body whole and undecayed, as if [he were] entered into dhīya-concentration.

Many Jewels then invites ‘Sākyamuni to sit next to him in the pagoda, and all the assembly rises in turn into the air. This frequently depicted scene is discussed by Bernard Frank.

Read in the light of this passage, the poem takes on another dimension: it becomes an even more hyperbolic compliment. When the hermit opens his door he is repeating on his level the action performed by ‘Sākyamuni to expose the splendid body of Many Jewels enclosed in the pagoda. The hermit’s opened door, reversed, becomes the door of the pagoda. In the hermit’s poem the splendor of Genji’s countenance (hana, lit. “flower”), recalling the “Dharma Blossom” (hokke/nori no hana) which is the reason for the apparition of the stupa, is superimposed on the face that evokes the whole body of Many Jewels. Elsewhere in the *Sutra*, those who worthily receive the *Lotus* are compared to the rare udumbara; here the comparison is to a buddha. We note in passing that mare (rarely) in the hermit’s poem echoes keu (rare), an adjectival epithet twice applied to the *udumbara* in the *Sutra* passage quoted above. There is continuity with the bishop’s poem, as well as a sense that we have moved beyond it. What is more, the description at the beginning of “Wakamurasaki” of the hermit’s dwelling, set high on a misty peak
and deep in the rocks, parallels the image of Many Jewels’ pagoda suspended in space (kūchū).

19 Can so precise and profound an allusion be legitimately excavated from a rather ordinary expression? Might I not be unnecessarily exaggerating the Buddhist import of these poems to produce the kind of arbitrary reading the Japanese call yomi-komi? In defense of my interpretation I will first refer to the Genji text. We have seen that the exchange of poems takes place against the backdrop of the Lotus Samādhi (hokkasanmai). As Kuo reminds us, Zhiyi himself declared that this practice “enables adepts of the Greater Vehicle to see the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, the stupa in which the two buddhas Sākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna appear, and the buddhas of the ten directions.”

The apparition of the pagoda is closely linked to the ritual heard in the distance by the protagonists. Although it has probably ended by the time the poems are composed, the saintly recluse still makes effective use of the circumstances to formulate his poetic flourishes.

20 The hermit’s poem has struck me from the start as an allusion to the opening of the celestial pagoda; for this reason, I was surprised to find no mention of it in the commentaries I consulted. In shakkyōka, poetry composed on Buddhist themes, the mention of a door opening—using toboso, the very word that figures in the hermit’s poem—is linked to the pagoda scene. This is particularly true in Jien’s (1155-1225) Hundred-Poem Sequence on the Lotus (Ei-hyakushu waka, Ei-Hokke-hyakushu-waka), a work that has greatly interested me in recent years. Toboso appears twice in this anomalous “hundred-poem” sequence, which in fact contains 144 poems.

21 The forenote to the first poem is a quotation from Chapter 11: “They go to the foot of the jeweled trees.”

木のもとや/konomoto ya/At the foot of the trees,
たからのとぼそ/takara no toboso/as the jeweled door
あけがたに/akegata ni/is opened in the dawn,
数かぎりなき/kazu kagiri naki/infinite in number are
光をぞみる/hikari wo zo miru/the rays of light I see.

The radiance is emitted by all the buddhas who have come to witness the opening of Many Jewels’ pagoda.

22 The second poem is even more interesting. Its forenote is a quotation from Chapter 22: “The stupa of the Buddha Many Jewels may again be as it was.”

おほ空に/ō-zora ni/High in the heavens
ひらきしやどの/hirakishi / hi[bij]ishi yado no / they opened with a great sound--
戸ぼそをば/toboso wo ba/doors of the residence--
あけし聖や/akeshi hijiri ya/shall the Saint who opened them
又もさしけむ/mata mo sashikemu/really close them up again?

23 Chapter 22, “Entrustment” (Zokurui-hon), probably marks the actual end of the Sutra: the Buddha’s sermon is concluded, the earth returns to its original state, and the pagoda sinks back into the ground. The poem reflects Jien’s quiet anxiety at the thought of the Lotus message disappearing. “Door” and “open” are mentioned in the poem, as is the Saint (hijiri)—the Buddha. We have seen that Murasaki Shikibu uses the same term to designate the hermit. Because hijiri is the Japanese reading of śāraja (Skt. ārya), a term signifying the Buddha, it is applicable in both registers. The author of the Genji monogatari may certainly have played on this double meaning, with the image of the hermit opening his door inspiring her in turn with that of the Buddha opening the pagoda.
We have seen, if I am correct, a significant number of allusions to the *Lotus Sutra* in "Wakamurasaki." The allusions are always made in an ironic, detached tone rather than piously, a fact which does not, however, make Murasaki Shikibu into Louise Michel. To be sure, Murasaki Shikibu enjoys transforming the arrival of the Shining Prince into an inverted vision: the worldly Genji revealing himself to the holy monks. Genji is a manifestation of the phenomenal, *kengon* 顕権, rather than the *kenjitsu* [顕実, what is intrinsic] of Tendai dogma—since *hana*, as typically used in Buddhist poetry, signifies both the *Lotus Sutra* and enlightened thought, the Buddha as well as ultimate reality. But it is not Murasaki Shikibu's intent to ridicule Buddhism. The Prince becomes briefly aware of his sinful state and seeks something higher: while visiting the bishop's house, he contemplates his horrific sins (waga tsumi no hodo osoroshū) and the retribution awaiting him in the next life (mashite nochi no yo no imijikaru beki), and muses that he would like to dwell in such surroundings (kauyaunaru sumai no semahoshū) [NKBT 14:188]. But he soon returns to his usual preoccupations.

Murasaki Shikibu thus employs Buddhist vocabulary in an interesting but not disrespectful manner. We have seen that a contemporary, Izumi Shikibu, wrote a moving poem on the same spiritual darkness that the Prince evokes in order to tease a servant. Another woman writer from this same period should also be mentioned: Akazome Emon 赤染衛門, whose personal poetry collection, the *Akazome Emon-shū*, survives. In his classic article on the history of *shakkyōka*, Yamada Shōzen describes the birth of the genre; suffice it to note here that the practice of writing a *waka* on each of the twenty-eight chapters of the *Lotus Sutra* was established in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and that the personal poetry collections of Fujiwara no Kintō and Akazome Emon are apparently the earliest surviving works with a complete series of poems based on scriptural passages (*hōmonka*). Leaving Kintō aside, we will examine some verses from Akazome’s Lotusian series. Her poem on “Devadatta” (Chapter 12) confirms that she considers the dragon girl episode central to the chapter.

わたつみの/watatsumi no/
みやをいでたる/miya wo idetaru/
程もなく/hodo mo naku/
さはりのほかに/sawari no hoka ni/
なりにけるかな/narinikeru kana/

"Hindrances" refers to the five kinds of rebirth unattainable by the female body: the self-important disciple ‘Sāriputra summarizes this information in the same *Sutra* passage. Kintō, incidentally, has two poems on this chapter, only one of which concerns the Dragon King’s daughter. This is the unique instance in Kintō’s *Lotus* series of his composing more than one poem per chapter, a fact which suggests the difficulty he had in isolating the most important aspect of “Devadatta.” Yamada observes that, apart from this one instance, Kintō and Akazome base their poems on practically identical sutra passages. Much as I would have liked to find the word *toboso* in Akazome’s poem on Chapter 11, “the door” does not appear anywhere in the *Emon-shū* series.

The absence of “the door” from Akazome’s poetry is more than offset by its treatment in the collection of another woman poet. This is Princess Senshi 選子内親王 (964-1035), the author of the *Collection on the Awakening of Faith* (1012), the first *waka* collection devoted entirely to Buddhist topics. Senshi was a contemporary of Murasaki Shikibu and her collection appeared at almost the same time as *The Tale of Genji*. In her collection Senshi has thirty *Lotus*-related *waka*: one poem on each of the twenty-eight chapters of the *Lotus Sutra*, plus one each on the two sutras traditionally seen as the
prologue and epilogue to the Lotus. Her poem appears after the chapter heading, “The Apparition of the Jeweled Stupa,” and the scriptural quotation, “Thereupon with his right finger Sākyamunibuddha opened the door of the seven-jeweled stupa, which made a great sound...”

When I opened the jeweled door, I did not encounter him: must I wander in this night without a dawn?

Although for our purposes the poem need not be explicated, it is worth noting the integration of the same night motif observed earlier. Although Senshi uses the simpler to for “door,” rather than toboso, her poem makes clear that the theme of opening the door was already present in shakkyōka in Murasaki Shikibu’s time. My interpretation of the Genji poem is thus consistent with contemporary and subsequent usage. The contrasting parallelism of Senshi’s tama no to (jeweled door) and Murasaki Shikibu’s matsu no toboso ([simple] pinewood door) is also significant.

I hope to have successfully demonstrated that a greater awareness of probable Buddhist references can give us a deeper understanding of apparently insignificant passages in The Tale of Genji, itself a work of infinite meanings.

NOTES

1. I wish to thank Prof. Terada Sumie for her encouragement, corrections, and valuable suggestions. Without her this little article could not have been written. (Translator’s note: Jean-Noël Robert, a specialist in Japanese Buddhism, is the translator of the Lotus Sutra into French: Le Sūtra du Lotus, Suivi du Livre des sens incomparables et du Livre de la contemplation de Sage-Universel [Paris, Arthème Fayard, 1997].)


4. The short quotations in the following summary are taken from NKBT vol. 14, pp. 177-180.


10. The daughter is known as the Akashi Lady (Akashi no Ue). Her relationship with Genji ensures his power, thanks to their daughter, who becomes empress.

11. SEIDENSTICKER, trans., p. 86.


14. DZK, vol. 9, p. 35; HURVITZ, trans., p. 199.

15. I am grateful to Prof. Terada for this fruitful suggestion.


21. Louise Michel (1830-1905) was a French anarchist who first distinguished herself during the Paris Commune of 1871 and devoted her life to political causes.

22. The two sutras are the *Muryōgikyō* (Innumerable Meanings Sutra) and the *Fugenkyō* (Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra), respectively. There is a fully annotated English translation of the collection by Edward KAMENS, *The Buddhist Poetry of the Great Kamo
ABSTRACTS

Buddhist motifs and allusions occur frequently in The Tale of Genji, but their presence has received little scholarly attention. This article addresses the famous opening passage of the “Wakamurasaki” (“Lavender”) chapter in which the hero first sees his future wife Murasaki. The scene is characterized by allusions to the Lotus Sutra, including the mention of the Dragon King’s daughter (Chapter 12) in connection with Murasaki (and later the Akashi Lady), and the image of the stupa suspended in midair (Chapter 11) that is introduced into a waka exchange. Analogous allusions are found in Heian-period shakkyōka (waka on Buddhist themes).

Il s’agit de décrire la multiplicité des épisodes isolés dans le Roman du Genji, anecdotes, micro-récits ou excroissances fictionnelles, mettant en scène des personnages, qui ne réapparaissent pas ailleurs dans le roman, et ne s’intègrant pas dans la trame romanesque. Ce trait est ici envisagé du point de vue de la lecture et de la notion de « place vide » (Leerstellen) proposée Wolfgang Iser. Si une lecture savante poursuit l’intégration des micro-récits, une lecture naïve pourra les mettre à profit pour retrouver son autonomie et jouir d’une lecture fragmentaire et centrifuge.

INDEX

Mots-clés: bouddhisme, roman, Dit du Genji, Sūtra du lotus, waka à thèmes bouddhiques

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キーワード: monogatari 物語, Genji monogatari 源氏物語, bukkyō 仏教, Hokekyō 法華経, shakkyōka 釈教歌

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