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Shunzei’s Lotus: Chronotopic Enfoldment in *Nijū happon no uta*

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Shunzei’s Lotus

Chronotopic Enfoldment
in Nijū happon no uta

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In the punctual centre of all circles white
Stands truly. The circles nearest to it share

Its color, but less as they recede, impinged
By difference and then be definition
As a tone defines itself and separates

And the circles quicken and crystal colors come
And flare and Bloom with his vast accumulation
Stands and regards and repeats the primitive lines.

-Wallace Stevens, *from The Packet of Anacharsis*

“The model for the sciences of matter is the ‘origami,’ as the Japanese philosopher might say, or the art of folding paper…”

-Gilles Deleuze, *from The Fold*
The following discussion of Fujiwara no Shunzei’s (1114-1204) Nijū happon no uta 二十八本の歌, a 28 poem sequence in which each poem is based on a different chapter of the Lotus Sutra, is part of an ongoing larger project that seeks to investigate the development of and relationship between three figures or tropes variously deployed in literature, criticism, and philosophy: folds, portals, and labyrinths. This study will look at a variety of mediums, genres, and contexts, including but not limited to the narratives of Borges, Calvino, Proust, and Buddhist sutra literature, the philosophical writings of Leibnitz, Deleuze, Hume, and Nietzsche, as well as the art of M.C. Escher, and of Japanese origami. Taking Angus Fletcher’s work Time, Space, and Motion in the Age of Shakespeare as a precursor for such a study, I also hope to incorporate current models and descriptions of the physical universe found in string theory and M-theory into a consideration of the way in which folds, portals, and labyrinths remain crucial figures by which the mind narrates its engagement with a world both within and around it. Although not articulated in the original talk, I invoke in my discussion of Shunzei here specifically the Deleuzian Fold, which usefully posits an ontic continuity between any two discreet spaces or objects. I also draw on Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope, as a way of describing the phenomenological folds or enfoldments that occur in the spaces of these shakkyōka 釈教歌. I have included here as an appendix translations of three Nijū happon no uta sequences: those of Shunzei, Fujiwara no Kintō (966-1041) and Akazome Ōmon (956-1041).

* * *

I’d like to start my talk today at the end of Fujiwara no Shunzei’s Nijū happon no uta sequence. The final poem reads:

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haruka naru
sono akatsuki wa
matazu to mo
sora no keshiki wa
mitsubekarikeri
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There is no need
to wait for that distant dawn,
far in the future,
when already we can see
the look of an empty sky.

The kotobagaki for the poem indicates that its topic (dai 題) is the following statement from the Lotus. I borrow Hurvitz’ translation here:

“He shall straight away ascend to the top of Tusita Heaven, to the place of the Bodhisattva Maitreya.”
The statement comes at the end of a longer, climactic passage in which the Buddha releases a grand finale of praise on the one who would “receive and keep, read and recite, recall, interpret, practice and preach the Lotus Sutra.” This being the culminating poem of the sequence, I cannot help but read it as a kind of statement about what it means to write a Lotus poem, or to write a 28 poem Lotus sequence. “There is no need to wait for that distant dawn.” Why? The Sutra suggests that those who engage the text in these various ways will one day reach heaven, but Shunzei reformulates this idea and seems to be saying that no, salvation is, somehow, possible now. Could it be that Shunzei had misunderstood the import of this final chapter? Or could it be that Shunzei had misunderstood something fundamental about the way the Lotus conceives its own ontology, and about the particular relationship between that ontology and the salvation of any individual who comes to the text, a relationship that is of course mediated and enacted through language. And finally, had Shunzei understood something as well about the relationship between the Lotus and a poem that is based on it?

There are three things I want to do today. First, I’d like to propose a theoretical framework or set of terms that I believe are useful for getting us further into Shunzei’s Lotus poems. Here I hope to show that the relationship between text, poem, and reader can best be described as a kind of presencing through a process of what I call “chronotopic enfoldment,” which I will elaborate on in a moment. Secondly, I want to argue that the Lotus Sutra itself predicts, prescribes, and privileges just such a literary process of chronotopic enfoldment as a program for salvation. Lastly, I want to look at just one of Shunzei’s poems in detail in hopes of showing how this program plays out in a single poem.

What is a chronotope? The literary term “chronotope” was coined by Mikhail Bakhtin based on Einstein’s idea of “space-time.” Simply put, “chronotope” refers to the way in which time (chrono) and space (topos) are structured, always together, in a work of literature. The development of a chronotope can be long and complex or at can be as short as a simple image. As Bakhtin writes, “Those things that are static in space cannot be statically described, but must rather be incorporated into the temporal sequence of represented events and into the story’s own representational field.” As I see it, chronotopes are by no means mutually exclusive. Many can exist in the space of a given work. Here I would like to expand on the Bakhtinian chronotope a bit by positing my own three categories of chronotopes to examine in Shunzei’s Lotus poems.

First, there are textual chronotopes, and these belong to the world within the work. They are the chronotopes that keep the story within specific bounds; they are the structures, however complex, that limit how long and how far the narrative goes. They give the story a beginning and an end, and provide the spatial boundaries beyond which the story does not continue. Both the Lotus Sutra and a waka are chronotopic in this first sense in that they both contain events that take place in time. On the most basic level, the Lotus is the story of Śākyamuni’s appearance on Numinous Eagle peak, the sermon he gives there, and the events that transpire. Likewise, a given waka provides a narrative, though often contained within the moment of the perception of an image along with an accompanying sentiment induced by the image or for which the image functions as an

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objective correlative. Yet the events within waka take place at a particular time and proceed within time’s continuum. Shakkyōka based on the Lotus Sutra share its textual chronotopes. A given poem can be spoken by characters reimagined from within the textual world of the Lotus, and thus contain one textual chronotope. Or they may be spoken by a believer reflecting back on a world that that believer takes to be historically contiguous (in so far he or she believes the events of the sutra did happen) with his or her own, and thus contain two textual chronotopes: that of the sutra and that of the speaker of the poem.²

The next category I would like to posit is that of metatextual chronotopes (meta in the sense of “beyond” or “across”) that mark the work off as a work from other works. These chronotopes are the characteristics of a given text—its language, its idiom, its tropes, its material bases—that differentiate it spatially and temporally from other works, from other genres, and even from other mediums, and that locate the work within a particular historical moment or tradition. In this respect, shakkyōka are partially defined as such by metatextual chronotopes characteristic of waka. This is to say that Lotus shakkyōka call attention to themselves as waka by employing the same form and rhetorical devices, strategies, and gestures found in other waka, and thus distinguish themselves as works from the other work on which they are based.³ Though these chronotopes operate in the world within the shakkyōka, and may function as textual chronotopes that shape that world, they are metatextual in function in that they also reach outside the poem in order to place boundaries on it. This is the self-referential aspect of the metatextual chronotope, its identification of the waka as such vis-à-vis other works, such as the Lotus Sutra. We might think of these chronotopes as indicators of a waka tradition, or those qualities of a waka that define the tradition, within the temporal and spatial trajectory of which the waka is located.

Finally there is what I would call the chronotope of the reader. Here it is useful to draw from the scholarship of Peter Shillingsburg on the several categories by which we might talk about a text’s ontology:

A piece of literature that might be expressed in any number of forms (in folio or quarto, on vellum or paper, in various editions, etc.) but that is not reducible to any single one of those expressions should be termed the “work.” Distinct apprehensions of the work that are expressed in words and punctuation form the “linguistic text.” This linguist text, in turn, may be housed in any number of material forms or physical “containers.”

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² Himeno Kimi discusses at longer length the modulation of viewpoints in nijū happon no uta: 姫野希美, 「藤原俊成の法華経廿八品の詠法をめぐって」国文学研究 104: 30-42. 1991
³ Edward Kamens has made these observations and argued along similar lines in Kamens, Edward. The Buddhist Poetry of the Great Kamo Priestess: Daisaiin Senshi and Hosshin wakashū. Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies Monographs 5, 1990, as well as in “Dragon-Girl, Maidenflower, Buddha: The Transformation of a Waka Topos, ‘The Five Obstructions.’” Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 53:2 1993, 389-442. My contribution to this discussion is to point out that these characteristics of waka have both a temporal and spatial dynamic inherent in them—that they are chronotopic.
combination of linguistic text and physical container forms the “material text.”

In so far as we can say a literary work or text “exists,” independent of (and yet interdependent with) the material base that provides the medium for its expression, it does so as something actualized first by an author’s creation of it and second through the reader’s encounter with it (through whatever material text is at hand). We might say that the Lotus Sutra, for instance, exists not only as the formal qualities of the language and idiom in which it was written (the linguistic text) and the material base in or on which it is encountered (the material text), but also as a work shaped by the reader, who himself or herself occupies a particular place and time. Works have paratexts, for instance, because readers are fundamentally chronotopic as well. This is to say that the way in which a reader engages a text will be determined by the chronotope(s) that govern his or her own circumstances at the moment of reading.

We can think of each of these three levels of chronotopes as enfolded by the other two, or as the fold itself that brings the other two together in the space of the poem. The poet’s engagement with the Lotus in the act of reading it and writing about it is the medium in which (or the force by which) the world within the Lotus is rendered and combined with those qualities of waka that distinguish shakkyōka as a waka. In other words, it is the poet’s engagement with the text that folds the world of the Lotus and the realm of waka together. The textual world within the Lotus, however, is the narrative material that provides the occasion for the poet to enter into the realm of waka through using its rhetorical devices, strategies, and gestures to express that material. It folds the poet and the waka tradition together in the act of rendering it forth as a waka. And finally, the waka tradition is the semantic sphere in which the poet engages the world within the Lotus. It folds the poet and that world together, making them present to each other. Thus these chronotopic levels, the textual chronotopes of the world within the Lotus, the metatextual chronotopes of the waka tradition, and the chronotope of the reader (or poet as reader and writer), each fold one onto the other.

Now, I want to switch gears here for a moment to talk about the Lotus Sutra itself, and the relationship between language, salvation, and ontology that is presented in this text. As we saw from the passage on which Shunzei bases the final poem of his sequence, the Lotus, (like most Mahāyāna Sutras but perhaps particularly so), is obsessed with its own survival, urging us to propagate the text in almost every way possible. This kind of rhetoric of anxiety may be explained by the fact that early Mahāyāna was what Gregory Schopen has called “a cult of the book,” in which the site of textual engagement with sutras replaced the construction of and organization of meetings around sacred stupas. Survival of the book, then, meant survival of the Mahāyāna. In any case, the rhetoric has implications that extend beyond a consideration of the historical circumstances that perhaps gave rise to it. One result of the sutra’s anxiety over its own survivability, for instance, is that it always makes salvation contingent on acts of textual engagement and

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reproduction. In other words, salvation in the Lotus almost always entails an act of language, whether that act be receiving (in written form), keeping (in memory), reading, reciting, copying, or interpreting the sutra. One must save the text in order to be saved by the text, and this soteriological exchange happens through language.

Let’s look at the whole passage that culminates in the phrase on which Shunzei bases his final Lotus poem:

O Universally Worthy! If there is anyone who can receive and keep, read and recite, recall properly, cultivate and practice, and copy this Scripture of the Dharma, be it known that that person has seen Śākyamunibuddha, that he might have heard this scriptural canon from the Buddha’s mouth... Be it known that that person has had his head stroked by Śākyamunibuddha. Be it known that that person has been covered by Śākyamunibuddha’s cloak... He shall attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi... If anyone in the latter age accepts and keeps, reads and recites this scriptural canon, that person shall never again want for clothing, bedding, food and drink, or for the things that support his life. His wishes shall not be in vain. He shall also in the present age gain his happy recompense.6

What I find particularly interesting here is the Buddha’s emphasis on his presence at the moment a reader engages the text. Anyone who would keep, read and recite, recall properly, or copy the text has, in doing so, “seen Śākyamunibuddha” and “heard this scriptural canon from the Buddha’s mouth.” In fact, Śākyamuni goes on to say, he is present to such a palpable degree that “that person has had his head stroked by Śākyamunibuddha” and “has been covered by Śākyamunibuddha’s cloak.”

Compare this passage with another in the chapter “The Lifespan of the Thus Come One,” in which Śākyamuni explains that his final passing into Nirvana is only an illusion, a form of expedient means or hōben 方便.

For the beings’ sake,
And as an expedient device, I make a show of nirvana;
Yet in fact I do not pass into extinction,
But ever dwell here and preach dharma.
I, ever dwelling here,
By the power of my supernatural penetrations,
Cause the topsy-turvy living beings,
Though they are near, not to see.7

What is significant for our purposes is Śākyamuni’s use of the word “here” 此, where he states that he is “ever-dwelling.” One way to read this “here” is in the light of the final passage of the sutra. That is, Śākyamuni is referring to more than just the textual chronotope of this particular event on Numinous Eagle Peak: the “here” where the

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7 Hurvitz. The Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma: The Lotus Sutra. 223
Buddha ever dwells is the very here and now of the moment the reader engages the text. We might say that Śākyamuni has folded his own chronotope onto that of the reader’s (as every reader, or copier, keeper and interpreter of the text is situated in his or her own time and space). Out of this enfolding a new type of chronotope emerges: the chronotope of presence. In these passages Śākyamuni seems (almost eerily) aware that his true lifespan depends on the cult of the book—on the ones who open the text and pass it on.

Just what this text is, however, is something that the sutra wants to interrogate. The Lotus destabilizes its own ontology by frequently referring to itself. So, the Lotus Sutra exists in (at least) three different forms: there is the sermon the Buddha first heard long ago; there is the sermon which the Buddha is now preaching to his assembly on Numinous Eagle Peak; and finally there is the Lotus Sutra that the reader encounters, consisting of Śākyamuni’s sermon as well as the events that transpire as he gives it. The Lotus Sutra seems to be continually translating itself outward from a (perhaps inaccessible) center and into other forms. There is something like a centrifugal trajectory of the text implied within the sutra. It seems to predict its own movement outward and away from its own previous self. The keeping, reading and reciting, and interpreting that Śākyamuni advocates are linguistic acts meant to preserve the text, but we can see in the way that the sutra understands and presents its own ontology that this process of preservation can also entail transformation.

Such transformation resonates with the Lotus Sutra’s central theme of hōben or expedient means. It is important to note here that the primary form of hōben in the Lotus is parable. Whether the burning house, the phantom city, the prodigal son or the jewel hidden in the sleeve, the truth of the Dharma is re-presented or, we might say, translated into language that is most suitable for its intended audience. Hōben thus always implies transformation: from emptiness to form, from timeless to provisional, from truth to anecdote. That parable is the privileged method by which this is accomplished in the text suggests that the Lotus inherently permits and even encourages its creative appropriation into other forms. To say otherwise would be to violate a central message of the text: that the teaching must be adopted, reimagined, re-presented, or even recreated according to the dispositions of its audiences. Viewed in light of the sutra’s own attitude regarding the soteriological role of language in its ontology, what it means to receive and keep, read and recite, recall properly, cultivate and practice, copy and interpret, all seems to expand. Perhaps it is the potential for creativity suggested by the Lotus’ program for salvation that Shunzei picks up on, and which becomes an integral theme in his own Lotus sequence.

Let’s turn our attention to Shunzei’s poem on Chapter 16, “The Life Span of the Thus Come One,” taking as its dai 题 the very passage we saw earlier in which the Buddha explains his passing into Nirvana is a form of hōben.

| karisome ni | That pillar of smoke |
| yoha no kemuri to | rises far off into the night sky |
| noborishi ya | only provisionally… |
| washi no takane ni | for the white cloud it becomes |
| kaeru shirakumo | will again return to Eagle Peak. |

As we saw, in the Sutra’s narrative the Buddha claims that he is eternally present (“ever-dwelling”) on Numinous Eagle Peak, and that the body that expires is not the real body.
In other words, Śākyamuni proposes a dichotomy between his real self and his provisional self. Though the two exist for the mean time, one eventually will disappear. In Shunzei’s poem something quite different happens. There is only one Buddha. He transforms (twice) and only then returns. Shunzei’s ingenuity lies in how he works waka tropes, that of kemuri and shirakumo, into a passage about the Buddha’s extinction. Here the Buddha literally undergoes a transformation into two classic waka tropes. In Shunzei’s view, the Buddha does not simply “ever-dwell” just beyond our view. Rather, he changes form and comes back. In the poem his being present on Numinous Eagle Peak is contingent on transformation—that is, a kind of translation of the self from something old into something new, from past forms into new forms. I read this poem as Shunzei’s way of articulating the relationship between the original sutra text and a nijū happon no uta sequence, a relationship characterized by a transformation that results in what I have come to think of as the Lotus Sutra 2.0.

Chronotopic enfoldment is the process by which these acts of transformation and translation take place. The lifespans of both the Buddha and of the textual world in which he appears are renewed each time they are folded into the waka tradition, undergoing metempsychosis into new forms. Yet the waka tradition provides the medium in which both Śākyamuni and Shunzei encounter or “presence” each other. This process is what I believe Bakhtin is getting at when he suggests that we “speak of a special creative chronotope inside which this exchange between work and life occurs, and which constitutes the distinctive life of the work.”

Shunzei’s engagement with the Lotus takes place as just such a creative act of poetic composition, an act of translating prescribed by the sutra as efficacious of and even necessary for salvation. So, returning here at the end to where we began, it is fitting that Shunzei would end his sequence thus:

haruka naru
sono akatsuki wa
tatazu to mo
sora no keshiki wa
mitsubekarikeri
There is no need
to wait for that distant dawn,
far in the future,
when already we can see
the look of an empty sky.

There is no need to seek salvation elsewhere. For Shunzei, it lies in the moment we engage the text. Having finished his sequence Shunzei understood, both for himself and for others, the creative power of reading and writing, of hōben, and of a lotus in which he might enfold himself and be made present in its world.

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8 Bakhtin. The Dialogic Imagination. 254
1. Preface

仏度諸眾生，其數無有量

“The Buddha saves living beings, whose number shall have no reckoning” (20)

watasubeki How could it be
kazu shi kagiranu that He made that promise,
hashibashira raising it on pillars
ika ni tatekeru and ushering numberless beings
chikai naruran all the way to the other side?

Shunzei

* * *

inishie no Since in the past
tae naru nori o he expounded on the Law,
tokikereba so rare and subtle,
ima no hikari mo I stare upon this shining light
saga to koso mire as a sign of good things to come.

Akazome Emon

kusagusa ni The blossoms scatter
chirikau hana wa here and there in all directions
inishie no and entrust themselves
kaze ni makasete to that wind of long ago,
huru ni zo arikaru blowing where it takes them.

Kintō

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9 Transliterations of all Shunzei’s poems are made from the original Japanese as found in 川村晃生. 「長秋詠藻」. 『和歌文学大系』東京：月治書院, 1998. Translations of the passages on which Shunzei’s poems are based (indicated in the kotobagaki or headnotes to each of his poems) are taken from Hurvitz’s volume, with the page number indicated in parentheses. Transliterations from Akazome Emon’s are from the original Japanese in 関根慶子. 「赤染衛門集全訳」. 『私家集全訳叢書』東京: 風間書房, 1986. Kintō’s are from the original Japanese in 伊井春樹. 「公任集全訳」. 『私家集全訳叢書』東京: 風間書房, 1993
2. Expedient Means

深著於五欲，如犛牛愛尾

“Profoundly attached to the five desires,
Like a long-tailed ox chasing its own tail...” (40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>takasago no</td>
<td>To witness the colors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onoe no sakura</td>
<td>at Takasago’s Ox Tail Peak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mishi koto mo</td>
<td>blooming on the trees…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>omoeba kanashi</td>
<td>How regrettable a thing it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iro ni medekeri</td>
<td>that I should be so bewitched.</td>
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</tbody>
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Shunzei

*   *   *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tokiokade</td>
<td>If he were to enter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irinamashikaba</td>
<td>his final state of perfect rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>futatsu naku</td>
<td>without explaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mitsu naki nori o</td>
<td>this Dharma neither two nor three,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tare hiromemashi</td>
<td>then who would spread the One Law?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Akazome Emon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hitokoto ni</td>
<td>It is with the One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yorite zo yoyo ni</td>
<td>that from within this very world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idekereba</td>
<td>I will escape it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>futatsu mo mitsu mo</td>
<td>For those other vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naki na narikeru</td>
<td>are to me but empty words.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kintō
3. Parable

其中眾生，悉是吾子

“The living beings within them,
Are all my children.” (67)

minashi ko to How could I have felt
nani omoekemu that I was an abandoned child
yo no naka ni when still in the world
kakaru minori no there remains ever present
arikeru mono o a wondrous law like this one?

Shunzei

* * *

moyuru hi no As the house burned
ie o idete zo I finally made my escape,
satorinuru and in that moment
mitsu no kuruma saw that the three carts outside
hitotsu nari keri were actually only the One.

Akazome Emon

kadode ni wa Though I had heard
mitsu no kuruma to three splendid carts awaited me
kikishikado outside of the gates,
hate wa omohi no I stepped from the flames of passion
hoka ni zo arikeru and found something beyond my mind.

Kintō
4. Belief and Understanding

無上宝聚，不求自得

“And a cluster of unexcelled gems, unsought by us, has come into our possession of its own accord.” (83)

mayohikeru
kokoro mo haruru
tsukikage ni
motomenu tama ya
sode ni utsurishi

The light of the moon
that fills with a lambent glow
my unsettled heart
shimmers on the unsought jewel
that found its way onto my sleeve.

Shunzei

*     *     *

oya to dani
shirade madou ga
kanashisa ni
kono takara o mo
yuzuritsuru kana

Having lost his way,
not even knowing his father,
sad indeed is the son
who one day will inherit
all of his family’s treasures.

Akazome Emon

sasuraeshi
mukashi wa oya to
shirazariki
ie o makasuru
kefu no ureshisa

In that distant past
I knew not my father’s pain,
having wandered far.
Oh, such happiness today
when he entrusted me his house!

Kintō
5. Medicinal Herbs

無有彼此，愛憎之心

“…since I have neither ‘that’ nor ‘this,’
Nor any thought of love or hatred.” (99)

harusame wa The spring rains fall
kono mo kano mo no here and there and everywhere
kusa mo ki mo on grass and tree alike,
wakazu midori ni and while making no distinctions
somuru narikeri dyes them all a verdant green.

Shunzei

*   *   *

nori no ame wa The rain of the Law
kusaki mo wakade pours down from the heavens
sosogedomo equally on all,
onogajishi koso but the trees and grasses alike
ukemasarikere receive it each in their own ways.

Akazome Emon

hitotsu ame ni The trees and grasses,
uruu kusaki wa moistened in a single rain,
kotonaredo are each different,
tsui ni wa moto ni yet will they not all end up
kaerazarameya returning to a common source?

Kintō
6. Bestowal of Prophecy

於未來世、咸得成佛

“…in ages to come
They shall all be able to achieve buddhahood.” (119)

ikabakari One indeed wonders
ureshikariken how happy they must have been:
sarade dani had they not heard it
komu yo no koto wa they would have wanted to know
shiramahoshiki o their fate within the world to come.

Shunzei

*   *   *

tsugitsugi no In making offerings
hotoke ni ōku to the myriad Buddhas
tsukaete zo of the distant past
hachisu o hiraku you will in your final body
mi to wa narubeki open up the lotus flower.

Akazome Emon

aratomete In dispelling wrong views
fukaki kokoro o I have achieved the deep mind
satorinuru of enlightenment.
shirushi o kefu wa For today I bear the marks
uru ni zo aikeru of the Ones who have arrived.

Kintō
7. Parable of the Conjured City

以大慈悲力，度苦惱眾生

“By the might of your great good will and compassion
Saving the woe-beset, agonized living beings!” (126)

yo no naka no On the loathsome road
kurushiki michi wa winding through this world,
awarebi no it is His compassion
chikara kuruma no that becomes a steady vehicle
hakobu nari keri to carry us all on our way.

Shunzei

* * *

koshiraete Had you not consoled us,
kari no yadori ni and had we not stopped to rest
yasumezu wa at this temporary lodge,
saki no michi ni ya would we not have lost our way
nao madowamashi on the long road before us?

Akazome Emon

inishie no I would not have kept
chigiri mo kai ya that promise I made long ago
nakaramashi to reach my goal
yasumete michi ni had I not rested by the road
susumezariseba and continued on my way.

Kintō
8. Receipt of Prophecy by Five Hundred Disciples

世尊於長夜，常愍見教化

“For the World-Honored One throughout the long night of time, Ever in his pity teaching and converting...” (153)

nagaki yo ni Could we have made it
nao satenomi ya through the long and difficult night
sugusamashi by any other means?
aware to mitsutsu Had He not taught us the way,
oshiezariseba regarding us with compassion...?

Shunzei

* * *

koromo naru I did not know
tama to mo kakete that a rare and precious gem
shirazariki lay hidden in my robes...
yume samete koso Only when I woke from my dream
ureshikarikere did I joyously find it therein.

Akazome Emon

kite fushite Drunkard as I was,
toko ehi nareba passed out fully on the ground,
koromode ni I awoke to find
kakaru tama to mo that a rare and precious jewel
samete koso mire had been sewn into my sleeve.

Kintō
9. Prophecies Conferred on Learners and Adepts

壽命無有量，以愍眾生故

“His life span shall have no measure,
Since he shall have pity on the multitude of living beings.” (155)

kagiri naki
inochi ni naru mo
nabete yo no
mono no aware o
shireba narikeri

That His very life
is beyond the limits of time
comes from the fact
that He knows the suffering
of all who live in this world.

Shunzei

* * *

morotomo ni
satori o hiraku
kore koso wa
mukashi chigiri shi
shirushi narikere

I predict you all
shall open to enlightenment,
and this very fate
is proof of the former vow
that you made so long ago.

Akazome Emon

futa nagara
miyo no chigiri no
arikereba
yuku sue kanete
yufu ni zo arikere

On account of the vow
regarding their future lives,
though they are two,
the ends to which they go
are bound together as one.

Kintō
10. Preachers of the Dharma

漸見濕土泥，決定知近水

“At length he sees moist earth and mud,
Thus knowing of certainty that water is near.” (165)

musashino no horikane no i mo aru mono o
ureshiku mizu no chikazukinikeri

At Musashino the well of Horikane is difficult to dig,
but what a joy it is to know that fresh water lies so close.

Shunzei

* * *

sumigataki kokoro shi muro ni tomaraneba nori toku koto zo murera narubeki

Should the worried heart not settle down and abide in this honored room, then one’s preaching of the Law will be an unlikely thing indeed.

Akazome Emon

nori tokamu mimuro mo soto ni nkarikeri
tada kokoro o zo sumasuberanaru

There is no other place in which one should preach the Law than this honored room, yet in order to dwell here one must purify one’s heart.

Kintō
11. Apparition of the Jeweled Stupa

若暫持者，我即観喜

“If anyone can hold it for a moment,
Then I will be delighted.” (176)

makimaki o If someone could hold
kazareru himo no but a moment the jeweled strings
tamayura mo that adorn these scrolls,
tamoteba hotoke then that would be an occasion
yorokobitamau for the Buddha himself to rejoice.

Shunzei

* * *

özora ni In the sky above
takara no tau no there appeared a great stupa
arawarete of many jewels
nori no tame ni zo and for the sake of the Law
mi o ba wakekeru He split his body into many.

Akazome Emon

sono kami no That ancient promise
chikahi taeneba will never be extinguished,
ikuyo to mo and so in the sky
shiranu sugata o we see now the ageless body
sora ni miru kana of one whose years remain unknown.

Kintō
“Gathering his firewood, his fruits and melons, Presenting them to him respectfully at the appropriate times.” (180)

By gathering kindle
and by collecting wild fruit
deep in the mountains
He was able to hear the Law
so difficult to encounter.
13. Fortitude

我不愛身命，但惜無上道

“We do not covet bodily life,
We do but regret the unexcelled path.” (190)

kazu naraba If I were among those
oshiku ya aramashi whose lives are worth coveting
oshikaranu then perhaps I would,
uki mi to kikeba but I rejoice when I hear this body
ureshikarikeri is not something to covet at all.

Shunzei

* * *

mi ni kaete To hold dear the Law
nori o oshiman we would forsake our lives…
tame ni koso For this very cause
shinobigataki o we would go on enduring
shinobite mo heme that which is hard to endure.

Akazome Emon

samazama ni Long will we endure
ukiyo no naka o the many kinds of sorrows
shinobitsutsu in this fleeting world…
inochi ni kaete Still we would forsake our lives
nori o oshimamu in order to hold dear the Law.

Kintō
14. Comfortable Conduct

“Deeply entering into dhyana concentration,
And seeing buddhas in all ten quarters.” (204)

shizukanaru
ihori o shimete
irinureba
hitokata naranu
hikari o zo miru

Setting up my hut
and then moving into it,
into that deep quiet,
there is nowhere before me
that I do not see His light.

Shunzei

* * *

na o agete
home mo soshiraji
nori o tada
ōku mo tokaji
sukunaku mo seji

To mention by name
another’s virtues or faults
is not to be done.
For when preaching the Law
one must preserve equanimity.

Akazome Emon

yo o somuku
kuse mo kokoro o
ushinaite
chikaite sue no
nori o hiromemu

The spirit of one
determined to forsake this world—
that I cast aside,
and promise to spread the Law
for all future generations.

Kintō
15. Welling Up Out of the Earth

從地而踊出

“Out of earth and welling up…” (215)

ikemizu no
soko yori izuru
hachisuba no
ikade nigori ni
shimazu nariken

How is it that
from the bottom of the lake
the lotus flower
rises all the way to the surface
unhindered and unstained by mud?

Shunzei

* * *

ikade ka wa
ko yori mo oya no
wakakaran
oite wa wakaku
*naru ni ya aru ran

How could it be
that a father is younger
than his own child?
Could there really be such a thing
as growing younger as you age?

Akazome Emon

tarachine no
oya yori koso wa
oinikere
toshi aragai no
hito mo shitsubeshi

If one were to say
he was older than his father,
then it is likely
that among those who hear him
everyone will doubt his age.

Kintō
16. The Life Span of the Thus Come One

現有滅不滅

“I make a show of nirvana,
Yet in fact I do not pass into extinction…” (223)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>karisome ni</th>
<th>That pillar of smoke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yoha no kemuri to</td>
<td>rises far off into the night sky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noborishi ya</td>
<td>only provisionally…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>washi no takane ni</td>
<td>for the white cloud it becomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaeru shirakumo</td>
<td>will again return to Eagle Peak.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shunzei

* * *

arinagara
shinuru keshiki wa
ko no tame ni
komeshi kusuri o
sukasu narikeri

While yet still alive
he feigns his own passing,
and thus for their sake
persuades his children to drink
the medicine of salvation.

Akazome Emon

ideiru to
hito wa miredomo
yo to tomo ni
washi no mine naru
tsuki wa nodokeshi

Though people watch it
coming out and then going in,
throughout the ages
the moon at Eagle Peak
has remained ever peaceful.

Kintō
17. Discrimination of Merits

“And, whether sitting or walking, 
Ridding himself of drowsiness and ever collecting his thoughts…”

okotarazu
By never relenting
tsune ni kokoro o
and by collecting myself always
osametsutsu
I will at some time
itsuka ukiyo no
awake from the long slumber
neburisamubeki
that makes up life in this world.

Shunzei

* * *

hotoke nite
When trying to count
etaru kōzu o
the incalculable kalpas
kazoete wa
of the Buddha’s life
chiri bakari dani
it is impossible to know
shirazu aramashi
even a fraction of the time.

Akazome Emon

kiku mama ni
As we hear Him speak,
mina hito michi o
we desire even more the Way,
masu kagami
and like a bright mirror
yuku sue made mo
He illuminates the path ahead
terashitsuru kana
all the way to its very end.

Kintō
18. The Merits of Appropriate Joy

最後第五十，聞一偈隨喜

“If the last, the fiftieth [of those told of the Lotus Sutra], Hearing a single gatha, rejoices appropriately…” (240)

tanigawa no
nakare no sue o
kumu hito
kiku wa ikaga wa
shirushi ariken

It is at the end
of the river current’s flow
that he stops to drink
yet great is the effect on him
for his having heard it at all.

Shunzei

* * *

yo no naka ni
miteshi takara o
en yori wa
nori o kiku beki
koto wa masareri

More than gaining
the many wonderful treasures
that fill this world
simply to hear the Dharma
is a magnificent thing indeed.

Akazome Emon

tsutaetsutsu
ana tauto to mo
iu hito no
sono hitokoto ni
shikukoto zo naki

When passing on the Law,
there is no greater thing to hear
from those who receive it
than the single, sincere utterance,
“Oh, how awesome this Dharma!”

Kintō
19. The Merits of the Dharma Preacher

“Also, as in a pure, bright mirror
One sees all physical images
The bodhisattva, in his pure body,
Sees whatever is in the world.” (252)

Having been polished
by a clean and purified heart
even the body itself
can become a perfect mirror
in which all is truly clear.

Shunzei

* * *

For my efforts
reading and writing the Law,
so hard to retain,
this sullied body will become
a mirror wiped completely clean.

Akazome Emon

Since the Dharma rain
will purify you through and through,
even despite your body,
why would you seek out a fate
beyond that of these obstructions?

Kintō
20. The Bodhisattva Never Disparaging

“When he spoke these words, *some in the multitude would beat him* with sticks and staves, with tiles and stones. *He would run away and abide at a distance,* yet would proclaim in a loud voice, *‘I dare not hold you all in contempt! You shall become buddhas!’* (258)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sono kami no</th>
<th>Now then finally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>araki tabusa no</td>
<td>he leans upon that same cane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsue ni koso</td>
<td>that once long ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsui ni kakarite</td>
<td>struck him down in violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>michibikarekere</td>
<td>and leads others on their way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shunzei

* * *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>miru hito o</th>
<th>The heart of one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tsune ni karomenu</td>
<td>who never took them lightly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kokoro koso</td>
<td>is the very reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsui ni hotoke no</td>
<td>that all those who were present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mi ni wa narinure</td>
<td>will become buddhas in the end.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Akazome Emon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>uchinoru mo</th>
<th>Just preaching the Law—</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sate mo tane oshi</td>
<td>even that alone in and of itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uetsureba</td>
<td>is planting a seed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsui ni minori no</td>
<td>so in the end the Dharma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>munashikaranu o</td>
<td>will not fail in its fruition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kintō
21. The Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One

“…After my passage into extinction, 
Should receive and keep this scripture. 
This man, with respect to the Buddha path, 
Shall assuredly have no doubts.” (266)

kono nori o This very person
kono koro tamotsu who receives and retains this Law
kore zo koro at this very moment
hotoke no michi ni is the same that was then declared
sadametaru hito would follow on the Buddha’s path.

Shunzei

* * *

sora made ni It is those among us
itareru shita no who keep and protect the Law
makoto o ba that know the truth
nori o tamotan spoken by the Buddha’s tongue
hito zo shiru beki as it reaches up into the sky.

Akazome Emon

medzurashiku It is from his tongue,
noburu shita nite uniquely long and wide,
minori o ba that we come to know
makoto no naka no the truth of the great Dharma,
makoto o zo shiru the innermost truth of all.

Kintō
22. Entrustment

今以付嘱汝等

“I entrust it all to you.” (267)

aware kensu
minori no sue o
kiku koto mo
yuzuri okikeru
shirushi nari keri

That we hear it today
in the latter days of the Law
moves us indeed,
for it is the positive result
of his transmitting it forward.

Shunzei

* * * *

nagarete mo
ada ni suna to zo
kakinazuru
uru koto kataki
nori o toketote

Even as the Law flows
I tell them never to give up,
gently patting their heads,
and go on explaining to them
this thing so difficult to grasp

Akazome Emon

itadaki o
kaesugaesu zo
kakinadzuru
egataki nori no
ushirometasa ni

Over and over
He strokes the tops of their heads,
concerned as He is
about the great difficulty
of obtaining this Dharma.

Kintō
23. The Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King

即往安樂世界

“…she shall straightaway go the world sphere Comfortable…” (275)

| tanomu kana | I can be certain |
| tsuyu no inochi no | that the dew which remains |
| keyuru toki | as my life expires |
| hachisu no ue ni | will rest on no other place |
| utsushiokunari | than on top a lotus flower. |

Shunzei

* * *

| tomoshitsuru | With the very light |
| waga mi hitotsu no | shining from his own body |
| hikari nite | that he set ablaze |
| amada no kuni o | he illuminated far and wide |
| terashitsuru kana | the various lands of the world. |

Akazome Emon

| akiraka ni | In a flash of light |
| terasu hodo ni mo | he illuminated the world |
| mi o ba oshimade | for us all to see |
| nori o omoeba | by not caring for his body |
| nori o omoeba | and thinking only of the Law. |

Kintō
24. The Bodhisattva Fine Sound

及び眾難處，皆能救濟

“…or indeed in any other troublesome place, he can rescue them all.” (281)

araki umi
kibishiki yama no
naka naredo
taenaru koe wa
hedatezarikeri

Whether roiling sea
or harshest mountain depths
there is no place
that can be completely removed
from the sound of his wondrous voice.

Shunzei

* * *

koko ni nomi
ari to ya wa miru
izuku ni mo
taenaru koe ni
nori o koso toke

Do we see that
he has made himself present
before our eyes only?
When in fact his wondrous voice
is teaching the Law everywhere…

Akazome Emon

nori no tame
kinu to miredomo
mi o wakete
itaranu kata wa
araji to zo omou

Though we see him come
for the sake of the Dharma,
he splits himself up
and now it seems there is no place
that these many forms do not reach.

Kintō
25. The Gateway to Everywhere of the Bodhisattva He Who Observes the Sounds of the World

弘誓深如海

“His broad vows as deep as the ocean…” (291)

chikaikeru Having made the vow
kokoro no yagate his heart was like an ocean,
umi nareba and because of this
hito o watasu mo there was no hardship at all
wazurai mo nashi taking people to the other side.

Shunzei

* * *

mi o wakete He split his body
amaneku nori o to widely preach the Law
toku naka ni yet here I am
mada wataserenu my same old saddened self
waga mi kanashi na unable to cross to the other side.

Akazome Emon

yo o sukuu Who would not enter
uchi ni wa dare ka into the Way that saves all
irazaramu since there is no one
amaneki kado o who could ever close the doors
hito shisasaneba of its wide and universal gate?

Kintō
26. Dharani

乃至夢中，亦復莫悩

“…even in a dream: let none of these harm them!” (297)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>utsutsu ni wa</th>
<th>Here in reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sara ni mo iwazu</td>
<td>there is nothing more to say,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nuru tama no</td>
<td>for even in dreams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yume no naka ni mo</td>
<td>jeweled and lacquered with sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hanare ya wa suru</td>
<td>such things shall be kept away.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shunzei

* * *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nori mamoru</th>
<th>Since I deeply vowed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chikai o hukaku</td>
<td>to protect always the person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tatetsureba</td>
<td>who holds dear the Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sue no yo made mo</td>
<td>I will never give up the task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aseji to zo omou</td>
<td>even for generations to come.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Akazome Emon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kagiri naki</th>
<th>Those who will protect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nori no chikara ni</td>
<td>the ones out there preaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toki sofuru</td>
<td>using the power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mamori wa itodo</td>
<td>of this limitless Dharma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tanomoshiki kana</td>
<td>are very trustworthy indeed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kintō
27. The Former Affairs of the King Find Adornment

又如一眼之龜，值浮木孔

“A Buddha is as hard to encounter as an udumbara flower, as hard as it would be for a one-eyed tortoise to encounter a hole in a floating piece of wood.” (301)

ware ya kore I have to wonder,  
ukiki ni aeru will I also be like the turtle  
kame naran who finds the log?  
kō wa huredomo Kalpas upon kalpas have passed  
nori wa shiranu o though still I know not the Law…

Shunzei

* * *

hotoke ni wa Because of the fact  
au koto kataki that the Buddha himself  
yue ni tote is so hard to meet  
ko o yurushite zo she allowed her children to leave  
oya mo susumeshi and proceeded on the path as well.

Akazome Emon

yami ni nomi Though I in darkness  
madoikitsuredo have wandered about through life,  
chigiriteshi these two companions  
tomo zo michibiku who made a vow long ago  
shirube narikeru are like signs leading the way.

Kintō
28. The Encouragements of the Bodhisattva Universally Worthy

即往兜率天上

“He shall straight away ascend to the top of Tusita Heaven, to the place of the Bodhisattva Maitreya.” (307)

haruka naru There is no need
sono akatsuki wa to wait for that distant dawn,
matazu to mo far in the future,
sora no keshiki wa when already we can see
mitsubekarikeri the look of an empty sky.

Shunzei

* * *

yukusue no Hearing him declare
nori o hiromeni that he will spread this Law
kitarikeru to the end of time
chikai o kiku ga I am moved by his words
aware naru kana and thankful for his vow.

Akazome Emon

tadzunekuru Since he made a vow
chigiri shi areba to come seeking us always,
yuku sue mo even in the future
nagarete nori no the waters of this Dharma
mizu wa taeseji will flow forth and never end…

Kintō