

An Essay on the Nine Persons Passing into the Pure Land in the Picture Hall of the Shoryo-in at Shitenno-ji, Restored by Jien: Spiritual Revelation

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In Jōō 3 (1224), the Picture Hall of the Shoryo-in at Shitenno-ji was restored by Tendai monk Jien (1155-1225) of the Kujo family. It is said that the portrait of Prince Shotoku was painted on the *shoji* inside the Picture Hall, and on the back was painted a portrait of the nine persons who would pass into the Pure Land, selected from Japanese and Chinese memoirs of those who reached the Pure Land. Japanese and Chinese style poetry also accompanied these people passing into the Pure Land. The details of this Picture Hall are recorded in the text of *Illustrated Deeds of the Priest Hōnen*, from which we can surmise its appearance. However, at the center of research on the hall is the portrait of Prince Shotoku on the front, and little light had been shed on these people painted on the back.

In this paper, I pay particular attention to the content and poetry of the biographies of these people. In all of these stories of those who have passed into the Pure Land, a common thread can be seen, in that they all contain a spiritual revelation (or a vision) as an episode. In addition, among nine Chinese style poems of Sugawara no Tamenaga, words relating to spiritual revelations can be found in seven, besides the highest and lowest levels of the Pure Land. This indicates that these people who would passing into the Pure Land of Jien's conception was selected for the many spiritual revelations found before and after the Jokyu Rebellion (1221), that is, in Jien's later years.

In a written prayer (*Shitenno-ji Shoryo-in Ganmon*) for Prince Shotoku in January of Jōō 3 (1224), Jien expresses his earnest feelings, praying that the spiritual revelation he had received from Prince Shotoku in Kempō 4 (1216) regarding the prosperity of the Kujō family and the well-being of the nation would be realized once more. In the postscript of this prayer, the affairs of the Picture Hall in Jōō 3 are described, and we can see that its reconstruction, along with the realization of the spiritual revelation, are captured. Therefore, it is probable that the portrait of the nine persons passing into the Pure Land who have this episode of a spiritual revelation became one with the pictorial biography of Prince Shotoku, and was intended to be a sort of instrument of prayer to realize the spiritual revelation received by Jien.

Illustrated Texts for Kowaka Dances:
Yashima (Volume 2) & Atsumori (Volume 2)
(Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts Collection)

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The original texts for *kowaka* dances (*kowakamai*), a narrative performing art which was in vogue during the Muromachi period, were widely popular not only as scripts but as reading material. They were also made into illustrated scrolls along with *Otogi-zoshi* (narrative literature written between the Muromachi and early Edo periods), and from the Momoyama period to the Edo period, what were known as “Nara picture books” (illustrated storybooks) came to be actively produced. In this paper, I will introduce an outline of each of the illustrated texts of *Yashima* and *Atsumori* (only the second volume of each) from the museum’s collection.

Both of these texts are believed to have come from the same set of *mainohon* (texts for *kowaka* dances) which included even more songs. *Yashima (Volume 2)* is based on the poetry and prose of the Kowaka style, while *Atsumori (Volume 2)* is based on the Daigashira school. Examining each illustration and comparing them with the illustrated texts, we can see that neither is directly influenced by the old movable type or Kan’ei print versions. A unique rustic style and careful expression of color are observed in the people, trees, rocks, waves of water, and decorations in the margins, and they are presumed to have been produced in the early Edo period, which coincides with the Kan’ei print version. They can be positioned as valuable examples in considering the lineage and development of illustrated *kowaka* dances, from Muromachi period illustrated scrolls to horizontal picture books, old movable type editions, printed books, and illustrated books influenced by them.