The Thematic Structure of *Eiga monogatari*: Secular Success, Buddhist Concerns and the Function of the Fifteenth Chapter, *Utagai*

（『栄花物語』正編のテーマについて―巻第十五「うたがひ」の役割を中心に）

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【概　要】

本論文では『栄花物語』正編に確認できる三つの中心的テーマ（即ち「今世における栄華」「仏教的栄華」と「来世を目指す人の苦痛と希望」）を紹介し、その一つ目のテーマから二つ目のものに展開させる、異質な第十五巻「うたがひ」の物語中効用と役割を考察する。

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What is referred to as the "main section" (*seihen* 正編), or first thirty chapters, of *Eiga monogatari* 栄花物語 (ca. 1092; translated into English as *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes*) can be generally divided into three distinct thematic parts.[1] The first constitutes Chapters One through Fourteen, and is marked by a focus on worldly glory, which in the tale is generally defined by the attainment of influence (in most cases through appointment to certain offices) within the structures of the Japanese court. In part two, which I see as spanning the next eight chapters, the thematic concern is with a Buddhist conception of reality, in which the affairs of this world are considered transitory, emphasis is placed on elements of Buddhist religious practice such as ceremonies and scriptures, and all attachments to the mundane or illusory world are discouraged. Lastly, part three, comprising the final seven chapters, centers upon the struggle which develops when people very much attached to the affairs of the world seek all the same to rise above those attachments and attain the ideals of Buddhist enlightenment. Described is the

1 Throughout this study I will be referring to William H. and Helen Craig McCullough's 1980 translation as the source for English-language passages and such things as chapter titles. I will include selections from the original Japanese text only in cases where I feel the McCullough and McCullough translation does not emphasize enough certain elements important to my discussion.

resulting pathos of their failures, and the salvation which yet remains for the sincere. Below, I will focus primarily the first and second of these parts, with a special emphasis placed on Chapter Fifteen – *Utagai* うたがい, or "Doubts" – as the instrument for the change in theme that occurs between them. This reflects the original motivation for this study, which was to attempt to determine the function of the unusual fifteenth chapter within the work as a whole. However, in keeping with this goal, the third part of the narrative will be addressed briefly, inasmuch as the final shift in theme I see in the main section of *Eiga monogatari* has implications for a complete understanding of *Utagai*'s function.

Chapter One leads us through a progression of imperial reigns, focusing on their worldly glories, as in the following: "The new ruler, Emperor Murakami, was all that anyone could have wished. Emperor Daigo's reign had been a brilliant one, and now with this virile, majestic, wise, and learned sovereign, Yao's son seemed Yao himself. Emperor Murakami was also a gifted poet, and a man who combined great compassion with a robust enjoyment of gaiety and splendor." [2] Even more, the reader is introduced to the fortunes of certain Fujiwara family ministers, and their sons and daughters. We learn of the Chancellor during Murakami's reign, Fujiwara no Tadahira, and receive a brief description of the positions held by his male children, who themselves "became exalted personages." [3] Chief among these is Morosuke, who has eleven sons and six daughters of his own. Next the reader is introduced to a very important element of this branch of the Fujiwara family's rise to worldly glory: the marriage of their daughters into the imperial family, and the ability of these daughters to produce heirs.

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2 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 1, p. 20. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 1, pp. 70–1.

3 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 1, p. 22. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 1, p. 71. It is Tadahira's line which rises to prominence in *Eiga monogatari*, often at the expense of other members of the extended Fujiwara family, with its many branches.

A list is given of Emperor Murakami's many consorts, followed by the comment that these "were all ladies who bore children – there were many childless ones as well."[4] Importantly, only those with offspring are named, as it is these women's ability to guarantee the imperial succession which is valued. Among so many, it is made clear that Anshi, Morosuke's daughter, held the foremost position. We are next told that two crown princes had recently died, and that there is great suspense over who will produce the next heir to the throne. This issue seems to be resolved with the birth of a son to the daughter of Fujiwara no Motokata, from a branch of the Fujiwara in rivalry with Morosuke and Tadahira's line. However, the reader's expectations – as well as Motokata's fortunes – are overturned when Anshi, Murakami's first consort, gives birth to a son as well. This child is promptly named crown prince, and the rise of Tadahira's line begins in earnest, the three elements of its courtly success having become apparent: the rise of sons to high ministerial positions, the marriage of their daughters as primary consorts to emperors, and the birth of crown princes to these daughters. These elements combine to gradually produce what is really the prize of the matter: unrivaled control over the court, and by extension the country, by Fujiwara ministers of Tadahira's line who are the fathers or grandfathers of empresses, fathers-in-law or grandfathers of emperors. This process takes time, and in the early chapters of *Eiga monogatari*'s main section there are others who enjoy power and prestige – mostly people born to other branches of the Fujiwara, or members of the Minamoto family. It will be with the rise of Tadahira's great-grandson Michinaga that the worldly success of the line reaches its full potential, and whereas he is a major figure in the work from the fifth chapter, it will not be until the eighth – suggestively titled "First Flower" (*Hatsuhana* はつはな) – that he becomes the main protagonist.

4 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 1, pp. 22–3. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 1, p. 74.

Although it is necessary within the context of this study to convincingly show that the first fourteen chapters of *Eiga monogatari* have as their primary theme the pursuit of worldly glory, it would be stretching the patience of the reader too far to present a summary of events for each, in the manner of the brief synopsis of Chapter One given above. It is clear from even a cursory reading of the tale that most of the goings-on in these chapters revolve around the assumption of court office, the various marriages of women into different degrees of prominence within the imperial retinue, and the births of children. Also prominent are the deaths of ministers, wives, and children, which are at once damaging to the fortunes of some, and yet also opportunities for the advancement of those who fill in the gaps these deaths leave behind. However, even if one were to allow that the primary theme of the first fourteen chapters is success within court structures, it is not the only one present. While I will later argue that Chapter Fifteen will mark a shift in the main theme from courtly success to religious attainment, there is certainly no lack of Buddhist elements in the earlier group of chapters. More telling than a summary of the 'power politics' which go on would be, I think, a discussion of how these Buddhist elements, although prominent, are subsumed by the larger theme of concern for worldly glory.

A compact example I find generally typical of Buddhism's place in the early chapters comes in the first: "The loss of Tadahira, a clement and humane ruler, was much regretted. He was granted the posthumous name of Teishinkō, Upright and Faithful Lord, and the sad days slipped by in a series of impressive Buddhist services. Saneyori, the Minister of the Left, became head of government." [5] Certainly it is made clear that Buddhist ritual is an important part of life, but the immediate mention of who is to fill the important position left vacant by

5 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 1, p. 25. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 1, p. 75.

Tadahira reveals which subject is of paramount interest at this point in the tale. Also in the first chapter, Morosuke, then Minister of the Left, falls ill, which greatly alarms the Emperor: "So great was [the Emperor's] anxiety that he ordered the performance of Buddhist rituals on the minister's behalf, a mark of favor that excited general envy." [6] Again, what is being focused on is not the religiosity of the rituals themselves, but the mark of social privilege that they represent.

To move on in the same vein, there is this line from the second chapter: "Reflecting one day on the uncertainty of human existence, Kanemichi [second son of Morosuke] determined to secure a promotion for Yoritada [son of Kanemichi's uncle, the regent Saneyori, a great friend and social ally of Kanemichi], the Minister of the Right, in order to place him next in line for the regency." [7] While the "uncertainty of human existence" will become the primary concern of the tale beginning with Chapter Fifteen, the response we see in this earlier chapter to an awareness of it is fundamentally different in kind: rather than make efforts to prepare himself for a good rebirth through Buddhist devotion and works, Kanemichi's one thought is to secure the eventual courtly success of a favorite before his own death.

Another feature of the earlier chapters which is almost completely absent between the fifteenth and twenty-third – and indeed on to the end of the main section – is the common presence of non-Buddhist elements right alongside Buddhist ones. In Chapter Eight, Michinaga's daughter Shōshi is experiencing a very difficult labor: "Bishop Ingen of the Hosshōji read aloud a supplication for the Empress's safe delivery, weeping as he

6 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 1, p. 38. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 1, p. 82.

7 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 1, p. 95. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 1, p. 114. "Reflecting one day on the uncertainty of human existence" translates「かかるほどに、大殿思すやう、世の中もはかなきに」.

described everything Michinaga had done to propagate the teachings of the *Lotus*. ... With every well-known Ying-yang Master in attendance, it seemed impossible that the gods could fail to respond to the calamity-averting rituals." When these combined rituals end in a successful birth, thanks are given to both traditions: "Michinaga and Rinshi, their minds at ease, returned to their own apartments, where they distributed rewards to the Yin-yang Masters and the monks who had offered prayers."[8] In Chapter Three, ex-Emperor Kazan is described as "not yet back from his pilgrimage to Kumano, undertaken after he had received the [Buddhist] commandments at Mount Hiei in the winter of the previous year."[9] Kumano was the site of three major shrines which were "unified by the 'Kumano faith,' a hybrid of Shintō and Buddhist beliefs," as a note to McCullough and McCullough's translation points out.[10] These are only two of many similar examples found in the first fourteen chapters of Buddhist practice sharing the spiritual arena with non-Buddhist elements.

This is not to suggest that the phenomenon of Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions interacting is in any way unusual. Syncretism had already begun to develop by the late seventh century, and continued to develop throughout the Nara and Heian periods: "Once Buddhism gained official government support, a natural movement occurred to unite the new religion with the indigenous faith; this is generally known in its early stages as *shinbutsu shūgō* (unification of gods and Buddhas). ... Besides the government, numerous other factions supported the development of *shinbutsu shūgō*. Shintō priests viewed it as a means of sharing the lucrative government benefits bestowed upon Buddhism,

8 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 1, pp. 401–02. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 1, p. 273.

9 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 1, p. 152. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 1, p. 143.

10 McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 1, p. 143, note 40.

idealistic Buddhists recognized it as a way to approach the masses and the common people accepted it as a natural phenomena." [11] At this stage of syncretism, native gods were described either as guardians of the Buddhist faith, much as the deities of the Indian tradition had been, or as advanced sentient beings seeking enlightenment. "Later, as the Buddhist institutions began to make a conscious effort to disseminate their teachings among the masses, the movement gained momentum and the *kami* [Japanese gods] were to be raised to an even higher status with the development of the *honji-suijaku* [True Nature-manifestation] theory." [12] This posited that local gods were actually manifestations of various Buddhist deities. As this process was well underway by the time of *Eiga monogatari*'s composition, there is nothing inherently strange about "gods and buddhas" being invoked in the same breath. By a similar logic, it is not odd for "Yin-yang Masters" – practitioners of techniques originating in various Chinese traditions, primarily religious Taoism – to be present alongside monks. What is important to this study is the way in which such 'joint endeavors' all but disappear after the thematic focus of the work is shifted to a Buddhist conception of spiritual glory, beginning with Chapter Fifteen.

Perhaps the most important difference between the position of Buddhism apparent in the first fourteen chapters, as opposed to that described within the following eight, is what often seems to be an unfavorable attitude towards entering the religion as a monk or nun. In the case of a young person, this seems clearly to have resulted from a generally-held sense that such a move represented the "waste" of a social life, or a courtly career. In the case of an older person, it seems to arise from sympathy motivated by the understanding that a social and courtly career has come to an end. Even when the tonsure is

11 Matsunaga and Matsunaga 1974, pp. 129–30.

12 Matsunaga and Matsunaga 1974, p. 133.

taken in situations where the recipient seems on the verge of death, the act is seen as something unfortunate, even distasteful. In one example from Chapter Eight, Michinaga's daughter, the Empress Shōshi, falls ill during childbirth, and is in grave danger of dying. Although this fact is recognized, onlookers seem more concerned with the negative aspects of entering orders, rather than the improved chances for religious succor this move represents for Shōshi: "To the dismay of all, the Empress received Buddhist commandments." [13] While this could simply mean that it was understood that taking such a serious step meant death was truly at hand, I think William H. and Helen Craig McCullough, authors of a translation and study of the main section, are also correct when they point out in a note to their translation that "the act was considered inauspicious as possibly presaging her departure from lay life." [14] In an earlier chapter it is the Grand Empress Senshi (who was either Michinaga's full- or half-sister; daughter Fujiwara no Kaneie, wife of Emperor En'yu) who is in danger: "At length she announced that her sole remaining desire was to become a nun. Her brothers were reluctant to agree but realized that her life was at stake." [15] Thus becoming a nun or monk is something that is unthinkable unless as a last resort. This position stands in contrast to that found in later chapters, in which the theme of Buddhist salvation has become prominent: in these, entering orders is seen as a generally positive course of action, one that frequently meets with regret on the part of observers only because they themselves cannot yet take the same step. And even if it must be acknowledged that in the main section's Buddhist-themed chapters as well, the taking of orders is in almost all cases

13 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 1, p. 402. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 1, p. 273.

14 McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 1, p. 273, note 70.

15 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 1, pp. 194–5. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 1, p. 164.

precipitated by some tragedy or illness (rather than being a step longed for even by the happy and healthy), it remains that the responses we find are markedly different.

While activities concerned with Buddhism such as those mentioned above are a common feature of *Eiga monogatari's* first fourteen chapters, there can be no doubt that they collectively represent no more than a minor theme at most. Despite the frequency of such episodes, most of the attention of the narrative is placed on issues related to movement within the social economy: the rise to powerful ministerial posts by various men, the successful marriages of various women, and the birth of children likely to secure social position for their parents. However, with the fifteenth chapter, *Utagai*, this changes. Itself resembling a Buddhist religious text in many ways, *Utagai* in essence transfers the glory Michinaga has gained in the secular, courtly world and re-evaluates it within the Buddhist context. In doing so, it raises the theme of Buddhist activities and ideals to the fore, a condition which goes on to prevail throughout the following seven chapters. The twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters will then presage another development in theme, which becomes explicit in the twenty-sixth as Michinaga undergoes suffering so severe that it challenges his faith. However, for the sake of brevity, this second shift will not be addressed in detail here.

From the start, *Utagai* is different. It is the only chapter in *Eiga monogatari* to open with a recapitulation of past events: all others continue where the last left off, or introduce the start of some new narrative line. Thus with the first line, *Utagai* halts the narrative as it has progressed to that point. It is also important that *Utagai* opens by commenting upon all of the court positions that Michinaga had *given up*, and by telling us that he was trying even then to give up the very last of these. The previous chapters had been concerned with the relentless *pursuit* of position, detailing the harried careers of courtiers moving both up

and down the social hierarchy: those who had given up position had done so because of illness, or through the machinations of others. Yet at the point *Utagai* opens Michinaga has not been seriously or chronically sick, nor have any plots come close to affecting his position. Nonetheless, after twenty years as regent (both officially and as a minister possessing *nairan* 内覧 powers), he is giving up his titles. Although he still retains most of his authority, as the rest of the work will make clear, the opening of the fifteenth chapter distances him from his worldly career. This too marks a break from the narrative as it has progressed up until this point, and indeed presages a change to the theme which will color the text through the end of the twenty-third chapter, and in many ways beyond.

Many of the events which take place in *Utagai*, particularly towards the end of the chapter, seem almost fantastic in nature, and appear to have no direct connection to the narrative progression that had been developed in the earlier chapters. Whatever scholars may decide about the empirical historicicity of *Eiga monogatari*, the tale had at the least maintained a mostly realistic presentation of events, with those events taking place along what presents itself as an orderly chronological continuum. That this should suddenly change in *Utagai* leads me to suspect that here again is an indication of a change in thematic perspective: the mundane social world which has preoccupied the narrative is being called into question, and recognition is being given to the often miraculous nature of the Buddhist universe, and the ways in which it controverts expectations about, specifically, the progression of time, as well as ideas concerning what is and is not possible.

What is at issue, in concrete terms, is the vast number of Buddhist activities Michinaga is said to sponsor and take part in, many of which require extensive travel. These are listed over fifteen typeset pages of a modern edition of the work (or over eleven pages of the English translation), and most are meant to

have taken place between the Fourth Month of 1019 and (at least) the Twelfth Month of the following year.[16] The issue is complicated by the inclusion of past events, events which began in the past and have continued, or those of an indeterminate time. An example of the first case is Michinaga's construction of the Samādhi Hall at Kohata, which is said to have been completed at the time he was Minister of the Left (he had left this post before 1019). Still, the building's dedication takes place during the time covered in *Utagai*.[17] An example of the second case is the following: "Ever since Michinaga's assumption of power, he had sponsored perpetual recitations of the *Lotus Sutra*. ... In addition to the perpetual recitations, Michinaga had sponsored annual *Lotus* expositions ever since his rise to power."[18] Finally, below is a somewhat more detailed example of his activities taking place at an indeterminate time:

> It would be impossible to describe all his activities at his own temples and private residences. Once he ordered images of the Six Kannon; at other times it was images of the Seven Healing Buddhas, or paintings of the Eight Events, or nine images of Amitābha. Or again he commissioned life-sized statues of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the Ten Days of Fasting, or 100 images of Śākyamuni, or a Thousand-armed Kannon, or 10,000 Fudō images; or he made an offering of the entire Buddhist canon, inscribed in letters of gold on dark blue paper; or he dedicated a painting of Daitoku, or presented 80,000 copies of the Lotus Sutra as an offering. To those activities (which were all designed to cleanse him of defilement and

16 Approximately pages 186 through 201 in vol. 2 of Yamanaka et al 1995–98; in vol. 2 of the McCullough and McCullough translation, roughly pages 504 to 515.

17 On the 19th of the Tenth Month, 1019. See Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, p. 193. In McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 509.

18 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, p. 187. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 505. Michinaga's "rise to power" is believed to begin with his taking up of *nairan* powers in 995, during Emperor Ichijō's reign, upon the death of Fujiwara no Michikane.

> to generate a beneficial karma), he added the diligent practice of repentance rites, as well as daylong and nightlong observances in the Buddha Hall. Month after month and year after year, pious works were his sole occupation.[19]

I am not interested in trying to speculate that the accomplishment of such a rich spectrum of Buddhist activity would have been impossible: in the first place, time has been so manipulated in the chapter that it is not at all certain how long Michinaga has 'objectively' had to perform his almost excessive number of pious works. It is enough to say that *Utagai*'s manner of presentation, and its free movement back and forth along the chronology of the tale – at times seeming to expand and compress that chronology to such a degree that it becomes unrecognizable – is significantly different than that to which the reader had grown accustomed in the first fourteen chapters. It is much more reminiscent of Buddhist scripture than the staid, 'historical' *Eiga monogatari* that had been earlier encountered. This is acknowledged in the chapter itself, as the narrator addresses the reader: "It is probably inevitable that my description of Michinaga's many religious activities during those years will give rise to doubts like the ones expressed in the "Gushing Forth" chapter [of the *Lotus Sutra*]. In the short period after his renunciation of the world, his pious deeds were too numerous to reckon – a situation exactly like the one in the chapter."[20] In the *Lotus Sutra*, the doubts in question are those of the followers of the Buddha – himself apparently only recently enlightened – who hear him say that he had personally brought the Buddhist teachings to countless fully-enlightened bodhisattvas that had just emerged from cracks in the earth. How had there been time for

19 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 198–9. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, pp. 513–14.

20 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 200–1. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 515.

the Buddha to do this? The Bodhisattva Maitreya worries that if those "who have just begun to aspire to enlightenment should hear these words, they will perhaps not believe or accept them but will be led to commit the crime of rejecting the Law." [21]

The narrator of *Eiga monogatari* seems to have a similar concern. Is the answer that the Buddha gives to Maitreya then also meant to extend to Michinaga? It is here in the *Lotus Sutra* that Śākyamuni reveals himself as the eternal Buddha, and that the illusion of his birth and enlightenment in India has only been an expedient means for making his teachings comprehensible to the unenlightened of this world. It seems clear that it is here that the narrator of *Eiga monogatari* seeks to shift the focus away from Michinaga as an earthly, worldly, social being, and to instead recast him as a religious figure, who, all the while the tale has been unfolding, has been mysteriously operating on a much more exalted level than the reader of the tale had thus far suspected. The theme of the tale is comprehensively shifted away from worldly glories to spiritual ones, and the very meaning of Michinaga's "*eiga*," or glory, is reformulated:

> Those who prosper must decline; where there is meeting, parting will follow. All is cause and effect; nothing is eternal. Fortunes that prospered yesterday may decline today. Even spring blossoms and autumn leaves are spoiled and lose their beauty when they are enshrouded by spring haze and autumn mist. And after a gust of wind scatters them, they are nothing but debris in a garden or froth on the water. It is only the flowering fortunes of this lord that, now having begun to bloom, will not be hidden from sight during a thousand years of spring hazes and autumn mists.[22]

21 Watson 1993, p. 222.

22 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 201–2. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, pp. 515–16.

Thus, despite all that has come to pass, Michinaga's true glory has only begun to "bloom," now that he has cast aside his titles and taken religious vows. It is to cause this shift in theme, and to call into doubt the reality of the nicely ordered courtly world that had been previously presented, which is one purpose of *Utagai*. It adds very few elements to the chronological narrative of *Eiga monogatari* (as I will note below), but its effect upon the way the reader perceives the theme of the work is great indeed.

I have said earlier that Chapters Fifteen through Twenty-three of *Eiga monogatari* are those in which the central theme is the pursuit of glory in terms of Buddhist spiritual advancement. In effecting this change in theme, *Utagai* is vital. In terms of the movement of people through the chronological period covered by the narrative, however, the impact of the fifteenth chapter is exceptionally small. Even were the reader to be unaware of the existence of *Utagai*, and Chapter Fourteen of *Eiga monogatari* were to be followed directly by Chapter Sixteen, the work as a whole, taken as a historical narrative, would likely not suffer at all. As if to underline this fact, the first line of Chapter Sixteen tells the reader what the date is: "the Third Month of the third year of Kannin," or 1019.[23] *Utagai* had *begun* on the Seventeenth of the Third Month of the same year: it is as though the narrative has been 'rewound,' or as though the developments of the fifteenth chapter have taken place in some alternate narrative space. Only two of the events which take place in *Utagai* would have to be included elsewhere, whether in the chapter prior or following, in order for the narrative to progress unhindered: Michinaga would have to take the vows of a Buddhist novice, and he would have to construct the Buddha Hall at the Hōjōji. Events that arise later depend on the exposition of these two things, making them necessary elements of the tale as it develops in a linear fashion over time. Given this accommodation, I believe no

23 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, p. 205. Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 517.

noticeable disruptions would occur on what we might call the level of 'plot,' and no events essential to keeping track of the cast of characters and their progress through the chronology of the tale would be left missing. Chapter Sixteen begins with the melancholy and death of the imperial consort Fujiwara no Enshi, a development that continues directly from the last pages of Chapter Fourteen.

What the reader of an *Utagai*-lacking *Eiga monogatari* would surely notice, however, is that from Chapter Sixteen onward through Chapter Twenty-three, Michinaga as a character would have suddenly become almost totally concerned with Buddhism, Buddhist works, and Buddhist practice. Also, they would note that Buddhist terminology, ceremonies, and ideas would have suddenly begun to feature much more regularly and prominently in Chapters Sixteen through Twenty-three, to the almost total exclusion of elements from non-Buddhist traditions. In both cases, the 'almost' is very important: I do not mean to imply that there is no longer in these chapters any focus on social prestige and power, nor that non-Buddhist elements suddenly disappear entirely. Grief is still shown when members of one's circle take the tonsure; the changes I am describing are not absolute. That caveat aside, there can be no question that such a reader would notice a pronounced change in the prominence of Buddhism as a theme. To effect this change in theme is, in essence, the function of the otherwise extra-narrative *Utagai*.

It seems useful here to return to some of the points made earlier in the discussion of the first fourteen chapters of *Eiga monogatari*, in order to confirm the degree to which the thematic focus of the work has changed. One point made was that despite the fact that Buddhist rituals were by no means rare, they were very often merely an accoutrement of social success. From Chapter Sixteen through Chapter Twenty-three, however, such rituals come to be presented in far greater detail, with descriptions often becoming quite technical. It cannot be denied

that in many cases the sumptuous nature of the rituals, and the flowery descriptions of each participant's costume and offerings, serve to inform us that these events yet maintain a social element. Still, this element is itself criticized by means of comments made, and attitudes expressed, by Michinaga, and the overall effect achieved by bringing the details of the religious services into the foreground is to emphasize their importance to human society.

More useful perhaps than the presentation of specific examples would be to simply note the sheer number and overwhelming prominence of the Buddhist rituals and Buddhist-themed discussions we find described in the eight chapters following *Utagai* (Sixteen through Twenty-three). Even considering only the major instances – those which are described in detail rather than simply mentioned – I count fourteen. These range in length from depictions of sutra readings on Michinaga's and Emperor Ichijō's behalf, one page apiece, to chapter-length expositions on Michinaga's Hōjōji complex (Chapter Eighteen) and the dedication of his Golden Hall and Healing Buddha Hall (Chapter Twenty-two). The remaining instances tend to be longer rather than shorter, averaging three or four typeset pages.[24] If one also takes into account the mere mention of

24 In addition to the examples already mentioned, I am including here the following: A large excerpt from a Buddhist lecture (Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 239–41; McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, pp. 533–34); a detailed description of invocations (Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 249–52; McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, pp. 538–40); a dedication of a hall (Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 257–58; McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, pp. 543–44); the dedication of Michinaga's Buddha Hall (Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 263–88; McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, pp. 545–60); the Ullambana Exposition (Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 292–94; McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, pp. 562–63); the Myriad-light Service at the Hōjōji (Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 342–45; McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, pp. 587–89); an Eight Expositions service (Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 349–52; McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, pp. 594–95); various Buddhist poems included in a larger series (Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 353–57; McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, pp. 596–601); the dedication of Empress Ishi's Abundant Treasures stupa (Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 429–34; McCullough and McCullough

Buddhist ideas and terms, it is no exaggeration to say that a page rarely goes by whereupon the Buddhist theme of this section of the text is not made explicit. Even given the frequency of Buddhist terminology in the earlier chapters of *Eiga monogatari*, there is no comparison: in volume as well as detail, Chapters Sixteen through Twenty-three are almost completely saturated with Buddhism.

There is also a great deal of concern expressed that religious services should not themselves become mere social occasions, although this cannot always be prevented. One example is when Grand Empress Kenshi's ladies decide to copy a sutra: "With everything so uncertain, it's a serious business to simply go through life accumulating karma burdens," they conclude. "Why don't we get the gentlemen to help us make and dedicate a copy of the *Lotus Sutra*?" The women throw themselves into this activity with such abandon that "[t]he enterprise seemed, indeed, to have become less a pious work than a contest, which might, one feared, have the contrary effect of creating a karma burden."[25] Just the awareness of this danger is already something unusual when compared with earlier chapters. The episode continues with Michinaga asking what gifts are to be given to the monk who will lecture at the dedication ceremony:

> "What do you have for him?"
>
> "A damask and gossamer night-duty costume and 100 rolls of silk," said Naishi no Suke, one of the ladies in attendance.
>
> "Much too extravagant," Michinaga replied. "I suggest that you give fifty rolls to the Lecturer and the rest to the title-chanters."[26]

1980, vol. 2, pp. 640–42); and Michinaga's retreat at Hase Temple (Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 435–6; McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 643).

25 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 233–4; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 530.

26 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 235; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 531.

This episode contrasts starkly with one from the twenty-fourth chapter, which I suggest is the first to mark a decline in the prominence of the Buddhist themes brought to the fore in *Utagai*, among them a lesser concern for social affairs. Grand Empress Kenshi (daughter of Michinaga, consort of Emperor Sanjō) prepares an outrageously sumptuous banquet, whereat ladies are weighed down under ridiculous numbers of silken robes. Afterwards, Michinaga's heir Yorimichi gives an account to his father, who is greatly displeased: "Such extravagance is simply appalling! In my opinion, it's too much for them to wear even seven or eight [robes], and I've told them all – Ishi, Shōshi, and the rest – to limit their ladies to six, even on the grandest occasions. The others have never failed to observe the limitation, but this imperial lady flouts my wishes!" [27] This is the kind of extravagance which has been generally avoided in the previous eight chapters.

With the preponderance of Buddhist ritual in the post-*Utagai* group of chapters, through the twenty-third (and in fact continuing on less consistently to the end of the work), it is perhaps not surprising that mentions of non-Buddhist practices should have declined sharply. The trend begins in *Utagai* itself: at the beginning of the chapter, we find that Michinaga has begun to feel ill. He has been ill before: in the seventh chapter, "Toribeno" (とりべ野), he is apparently attacked by a malignant spirit. "But perhaps the innumerable vows [of well-wishers] were of some assistance," we are told, "or possibly a god or Buddha intervened, for the Yin-yang Masters announced that a change of residence would effect a cure." [28] This earlier illness is mentioned in *Utagai*, but only, I think, as a way of making clear

27 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 457–8; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 655.

28 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 1, p. 334; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 1, p. 234.

how different both Michinaga's new ailment and his attitude towards it are: "A number of his associates, recalling that precedent, now urged him to change his residence, but he rejected all their suggestions, preferring to leave his fate entirely in the hands of the buddhas."[29] Whereas before Yin-yang masters had administered to him as well as monks, here they are absent. More telling is that here he no longer sees the need to call on the gods (*kami* 神) as well as the buddhas.

His illness in *Utagai*, in fact, reminds one of the illness of the lay-bodhisattva Vimalakīrti in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*: the protagonist there feigns illness in order to gather around him well-wishing bodhisattvas, arhats, and laymen so that he may then expound the dharma to them.[30] Vimalakīrti's malady, which he explains away as simply his worry over the unenlightenment of so many sentient beings, is never spoken of again after the ploy is successful in gathering his audience around him. This very image is brought up later in *Utagai*, lending credence to the association with Michinaga's own illness in the chapter.[31] Michinaga's sickness serves I think as a demarcation rather than an actual event in his life: it marks the death of his worldly person, leaving behind only that part of him which is concerned with the path of Buddhist practice. It marks the death of his karmic burdens, as represented by the voices of spirits seeking revenge against him for worldly wrongs: "He listened cheerfully to the ravings of the spirits, which were frantic with disappointment and vexation. After a few days their voices began to fade away, and he was well enough to eat some fruit."[32] The

29 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, p. 174; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 494. The original of "preferring to leave his fate entirely in the hands of the buddhas" reads:「ただ仏を頼みたてまつらせたまへり」.

30 Thurman 1976, pp. 21–24.

31 "Sometimes the thought of the householder Vimalakīrti's illness, caused by worry over the sins of living beings, came unbidden to [Michinaga's] mind, and he found himself deeply moved." Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, p. 197; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 512.

32 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 178–9; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980,

illness is purely symbolic, as shown by Michinaga's almost immediate recovery upon taking the vows of a Buddhist novice, and the total absence of any effects or mention of the life-threatening sickness anywhere in the remainder of the chapter. More to the point, it serves as a means to bring Michinaga to his vows, and thus as a device for bringing to the fore the previously minor theme of Buddhism. Therefore it is natural that such figures as Yin-yang masters and non-Buddhist gods should be absent from the scene. Similarly, once the theme of Buddhism has been brought to the foreground of *Eiga monogatari*, it is not strange to see instances of syncretism all but disappear from the narrative's description of events.[33]

The final point I would like to return to is the attitude towards those who take the tonsure. In the earlier part of the work, such a move is overwhelmingly met with a sense of regret, primarily due either to the fact that sickness had cut short the person's lay career, or that old age meant their days of social glory had essentially run their course. While these elements are not entirely absent from what I am suggesting are Buddhist-themed chapters, regret can generally be said to be tempered by the sense that the person taking vows is doing a great thing for their spiritual future. One important example is the reaction Michinaga has to the decision of his granddaughter, Princess Shūshi (daughter of Retired Emperor Ichijō and Fujiwara no Teishi), to renounce the world:

> Michinaga hurried to the Princess's house and showered her with sympathetic comments. "The late ex-Emperor had exactly the same desire to end his days in holy orders," he said. "Even the longest life is soon spent. Now you must

vol. 2, p. 497.

33 They do not completely disappear, however. In Chapter Twenty-one, for example, a nurse of Fujiwara no Seishi (daughter of Fujiwara no Norimichi) is accused of indiscreet liaisons: "Let matters take their course," she thought. "The gods and buddhas are here to protect me." See Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, p. 390, and McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 617. Such incidents, however, are comparatively rare.

> think only of becoming a buddha so that you will have a splendid future in this world and the next. The daughter of King Prasenajit experienced a religious awakening without having been taught by others. When she cut her hair, was it because someone urged her to do it? This rare display of resolution reminds me of those ancient days.[34]

Thus what would be a terrible turn of events from the point of view of one obsessed with courtly success is recognized instead as a positive act by one awakened to the true nature of this world, and thus to the true meaning of "*eiga*," or glory.

As I have mentioned before, I believe that the main section of *Eiga monogatari* can be divided into three parts. The first two of these I have attempted to describe: Chapters One through Fourteen as being centered around the theme of worldly success, and Chapters Sixteen through Twenty-three as being concerned with a more Buddhist ideal of what is important in life. Further, I have described what I believe to be one function of Chapter Fifteen; namely, to make explicit this change in theme while still remaining somewhat detached from the chronological narrative of the work. For the sake of brevity I am electing not to describe in detail what I see as a second change of theme, one that develops primarily in the Twenty-sixth and Twenty-seventh chapters and continues to the end of the work. However I would like to take up the subject in a limited way, as it is important for understanding what I see as another function of Chapter Fifteen in the tale.

The change in theme I am describing is in many ways presaged in Chapter Twenty-four: although no dramatic crises take place, the focus of the chapter is decidedly worldly, with ladies rushing about consumed with worry about their appearance, and fretting over the social niceties of a grand public

34 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 395–6; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 620.

event. Importantly, the event in question is not a Buddhist one, but the banquet sponsored by Kenshi, already mentioned above in connection with Michinaga's displeasure over the degree of ostentation it showcases. This return to non-Buddhist pomp, after so many pages of detailed Buddhist imagery, is startling, and serves to indicate that the world of social relationships is returning in prominence. Chapter Twenty-five, though in many ways a return to the Buddhist language of earlier chapters, is also important in that in it Michinaga shows a strong attachment to his ill daughter Kenshi; and while he manages to keep his distress at bay, his feelings as a parent come close to upsetting his religious reserve. This is a sign of things to come.

What does come is nothing less than a crisis of faith, brought about by crushing grief over the loss of a beloved child. This grief is suffered first by Michinaga, and later by Fujiwara no Kintō, whose musings on the nature of attachment succinctly encapsulate what I see as the third theme of the work. This grief is great enough to make Michinaga, for his part, lose the spiritual composure and confidence he had displayed in the previous ten chapters, and question his faith in the buddhas.

In his speech to Shūshi upon her taking of vows, included above, Michinaga recognizes that "[e]ven the longest life is soon spent." He appears to acknowledge the central Buddhist tenet that this world is illusion, and that one must forgo one's attachment to it and focus on the world after death. However, when it is his own treasured daughter Kishi who must leave this world of illusion, the buddha-like level of enlightenment he is described as having attained in *Utagai* is swept away, and his deep attachment to this life reasserts itself. Kishi's death – in spite of round after round of supplications to the Buddhist deities – in effect breaks the spell of *Utagai*: "The sounds of mystic invocations and sutra-reading were lost in the roar of voices calling on Kannon. Since a single utterance of that sacred name by one person is said to have the greatest efficacy, it seemed that

with the invocations of so many, Kishi must surely survive in spite of everything. But it was not to be, and life finally came to an end for her in her nineteenth year. It was a devastating blow. ... Michinaga rushed away and took to his bed, dazed with grief." [35]

From this point on, Michinaga's religious poise is shattered. During Kishi's funeral, he is repeatedly shown "rolling on the floor" and "writhing" in grief: even to those who sympathized with him, "his behavior seemed extravagant." [36] Finally faced with the reality of his daughter's lifeless corpse, he cries out "Where has she fled to? ... Where has she gone?" [37] While the feeling is understandable, it seems an odd thing for the buddha-like Michinaga of recent chapters to ask. More telling, he has begun to doubt his faith: "We know well enough that there is no permanence in the world," relates the narrator, "but this was a blow so monstrous that Michinaga's heart almost burst with bitterness and resentment, even towards the buddhas and gods." [38] This return of the syncretic phrase "buddhas and gods" is no accident: on the very next page Michinaga is consulting with the Yin-yang master Abe no Yoshihira on a suitable day for Kishi's funeral. Not only is his faith in Buddhism shaken, it is not as exclusive as it had been up until this event.

Gradually, Michinaga regains some of his faith, yet it is not the same as it was. Both points are attested to in a poem he writes, which at once recognizes the existence of the Buddha, while also making clear that he cannot break the attachment he feels:

35 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, p. 507; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 676.

36 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, p. 512; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 679.

37 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, p. 513; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 679.

38 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, p. 509; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 677.

Kano yo ni wa	In the world beyond
Ware yori hoka no	She may have another parent
Oya ya aran	To take my place,
Sate dani omou	But even so I would like to know:
Hito o kikabaya	Could he love her as I do? [39]

Bishop Ingen, who in *Utagai* had granted that Michinaga had become enlightened to such a degree that there was little to differentiate between him and a buddha, now makes another observation: "I had thought of you all these years as a provisional incarnation of some god or buddha, but now I detect an astonishing lack of substance." [40]

This change in Michinaga represents what I see as the new theme which underlies the remaining chapters of the main section of *Eiga monogatari*: whereas a person may develop a devout religious faith, genuinely hold up the ideal of detachment from this transient world, and sincerely seek to secure an admirable position in the life to come, their very humanity – their love of spouses, of children, of life itself – acts as an unavoidable obstacle for the fulfillment of their pious desires. It is the pathos which results from this conflict that is the theme with which the main section of the work draws to a close. A statement of this theme is given by Kintō, who has himself lost a dearly beloved daughter. Although he wishes to take vows and retreat from the world, his love for his family makes the task extremely difficult:

> Nothing is as wretched as the human heart. The heart is the one great deterrent to those for whom renunciation of the world should be easiest – people who have lost a beloved child or spouse, or who have suffered humiliation or misfortune. The usual tender-hearted person is

39 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, pp. 520–1; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 683.

40 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, p. 529; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 687.

> incapable of taking holy vows; that is why so few gain rebirth into the Pure Land and become buddhas.[41]

The outlook for tender-hearted people such as Kintō and Michinaga is not completely bleak, however. In *Utagai*, the Bishop Ingen makes a prediction about Michinaga: "In this world he will enjoy long life; in the next, he will ascend to the highest level of the first class in the Land of Ultimate Bliss." [42] While it has turned out that such lofty goals as this may be beyond the reach of those who feel love as do Michinaga and Kintō, there is still hope. In the final chapter of *Eiga monogatari*, we receive confirmation through dreams that Michinaga has indeed achieved rebirth in the Pure Land, although he manages only to be "reborn at the lowest level of the lowest class of paradise."[43]

As previously noted, one of the implications of a second change of theme in *Eiga monogatari*'s main section is that Chapter Fifteen takes on another function within the text as a whole, in addition to simply shifting the theme of the work from worldly concerns to Buddhist ones. I would suggest that the effect of placing the fifteenth chapter in the work, and of the rigorous maintenance of the concerns it presents over the eight chapters that follow it, is to produce what we might refer to as 'thematic irony' when this Buddhist theme is superseded by the theme developed next, which I will call somewhat over-grandly the "pathos of the tender-hearted Buddhist." This occurs because even while the theme of the events described in chapters twenty-four through thirty has changed, the basic *validity* of the Buddhist ideals presented in chapters fifteen through twenty-three is never questioned. That is to say, although the essential

41 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 3, p. 47; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 707.

42 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 2, p. 178; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 496.

43 Yamanaka et al 1995–98, vol. 3, pp. 174–5; Translation: McCullough and McCullough 1980, vol. 2, p. 770. These ranking are found in the *Amitāyurdhyāna Sutra*.

impossibility of a person actually achieving complete detachment from the affairs of this world is described, the achievement of such detachment remains the ideal all the same.

Dramatic irony is the suspense created when the reader "shares with the author knowledge of present or future circumstances of which a character is ignorant; in that situation, the character unknowingly acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances, or expects the opposite of what we know that fate holds in store." [44] If that is true, and theme is "a general concept or doctrine, whether implicit or asserted, which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader," [45] then I would suggest a 'thematic irony' can take place if the reader has been given a persuasive exposition of a theme, and then has the opportunity to watch characters in the work act in ways contrary to, or showing a less-than-clear conception of, that theme. In the main section of *Eiga monogatari*, the Buddhist worldview is presented persuasively in the middle chapters. Thus, when even Michinaga cannot help but act in ways that the reader understands to be contrary to his future in the next life, we experience a kind of dramatic irony which revolves around issues of theme: the future circumstance which we know awaits Michinaga – now so attached to this world – is a much lower rebirth than that which he seemed destined to achieve in *Utagai* and the Buddhist-themed chapters.

The chapters that make up the main section *Eiga monogatari* constitute a complex work. The above has been an attempt to understand it as a cohesive narrative, though at times it does not seem to be. Of particular importance to understanding the text in this way is an understanding of how the largely extra-narrative, somewhat anti-historical Chapter Fifteen functions in relation to the text as a whole. After approaching the issue

44 Abrams 1993, p. 99.
45 Abrams 1993, p. 121.

through an exegesis of the different themes which operate in the narrative, it seems most reasonable to conclude that *Utagai* fulfills two main functions: first, it is the means by which the thematic focus is shifted to a Buddhist conception of glory, or "*eiga*," from one which had held up worldly success as the primary goal. Second, as the theme of the work shifts again from Buddhist ideals of success to the pathos which results from the essential unattainablility of those ideals, it has the effect of creating a sense of thematic irony: because the chapter has developed a persuasive case for the value of Buddhist ideals which are later shown to be unachievable, in the third part of the work the reader watches characters progress with the knowledge that their actions will be deleterious to their spiritual future. Understanding the functions of *Utagai* in this way allows one to regard the chapter not as an anomaly within an otherwise fairly cohesive narrative, but rather as a vital component of that narrative.

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