

“Sexual Heresies” in Medieval Japan:
With Special Focus on the So-called “Tachikawa-ryū”

Thank you very much for this very kind introduction. Before beginning, I would like to say some words about the circumstances in which this talk came to be. I came to Kyoto at the end of this June, to meet Prof. Forte for the first time in four years. Just the day before our appointment, he was hospitalized, and I went to the hospital to meet him. He seemed in better condition than I feared, and we could manage to talk about a few things. At that time, he very kindly suggested that I give a talk here, at the Italian Institute, in September. I was delighted to accept. A couple of days after I came back to Tokyo, I received a telephone call from Prof. Forte, and discussed once more this very talk. – And that was the last time I heard his voice. Nino Forte was one of my best and most respected friends since more than 30 years. I am so sorry for his premature passing, and would like to dedicate my talk this evening to his memory.

I am rather nervous tonight, because this is the first time for me to give so long a talk in English, and my English is very poor. Furthermore, I fear that the topic of my talk seems indecent to some; I would like to present my apologies in advance, especially to the ladies present.

I have already addressed the problem of the so-called “Tachikawa-ryū” on other occasions, but it seemed to me that what I tried to convey was not very well understood. I even wrote an article in Japanese, which I hoped would change the specialist’s view on this issue, but unfortunately, its impact seemed minor and barely noticed. This is indeed a very complicated issue, in large part because of some preconceptions that were established a long time ago. So I think I must change strategies, and present the matter in a different way.

Incidentally, I believe my audience this evening is not entirely composed of specialists of Japanese medieval religion, and so you may be freer from these preconceptions. Therefore, it may be easier for me to present my arguments. In the West, the first thing the word ‘heresy’ may evoke is gnosticism. The study of gnosticism has a long history, but it can be divided into two main periods, namely before the discovery of the manuscripts of Nag Hamadi, and after that discovery. Before the discovery of these manuscripts, there were very few documents that one could believe to be original texts authored by gnostics themselves; scholars had to work primarily on texts written by Christian fathers (called “heresiologues”) who were criticizing gnosticism. Since these texts were naturally biased, scholars had to be very critical in handling them. They contained many quotations which the authors claimed to be extracted from gnostic works, but the scholars were sensitive enough not to take this claim at the face value. It is only after the discovery of Nag Hamadi manuscripts which constituted a collection of authentic gnostic texts, that many of these quotations could be identified, and could be identified as belonging to gnostic literature.

Similarly, it is possible to say that the study of medieval Japanese heresies is at the stage of the “pre-Nag Hamadi discovery.” Actually, the situation is even worse, because we have some “heresiological works” written by upholders of the orthodoxy, well known since long time, but they have almost never been studied in a critical way (the critical studies of these documents have been initiated by a young German scholar named Stefan Köck; my studies only follow his achievements); we have some manuscripts which seem to have belonged to the lineages attacked by the orthodoxy, but they are very little known and have been studied only very partially. Fundamentally, I think the issue of heresy in Christianity and in Japanese Buddhism are very different; Early Christianity, especially, could be defined itself as opposed to the various heresies; on the contrary, the opposition between the orthodoxy and what can be called

“heresies” in Japanese medieval Buddhism seems to have never been very sharp, and the orthodoxy appears to have attacked what was qualified as “false teachings” mainly for opportunistic reasons.

That being said, I shall try to present the “heresiological works” in question. There are primarily three texts; the first in chronological order is the *Juhō-yōjin-shū* 受法用心集 by Shinjō 心定 written in 1268 twelve sixty-eight; the second and the third were written by Yūkai 宥快 (1345–1416), both composed probably in 1375 thirteen seventy-five, the *Hōkyōshō* 宝鏡鈔 and the *Tachikawa shōgyō mokuroku* 立河聖教目錄. Most important from the point of view of later influence is the *Hōkyōshō*; this is the work I will analyze shortly (I will also later address the *Juhō-yōjin-shū*; regarding the *Tachikawa shōgyō mokuroku*, I will unfortunately not have the time to deal with, except for a short passage).

The 宝鏡鈔 is indeed a strange work. It is a short text of less than four pages in the Taisho Canon edition. It begins with a brief account of the principal orthodox lineages of the Shingon school. Then a question is raised about how to distinguish what is “correct” from what is “perverse” (邪正分別). The author describes in few words (eight lines in the Taisho edition) the lineage and the doctrine of what he calls the *Tachikawa-ryū*. He goes on to qualify the Tachikawa-ryū as the “original source of all the perverse teachings” (*jahō no ranshō* 邪法濫觴); then he quotes two short classic texts, one from the 大仏頂首楞嚴經 and another from the 大日經疏; the author subsequently adds two sentences about the lineage of the Tachikawa-ryū and the works which would have belonged to it. Afterwards, he continues his diatribe: “And the lineage of 明澄, 賢誓 and others contains many perverse teachings”; he then lists up some works of that lineage (the 龍光院流 of the 中院流, an important lineage on Kōyasan). The author also mentions the branch named 御流三宝院 in the 關東. After having exposed these “perverse lineages,” Yūkai adds that, although not belonging to the Tachikawa-ryū, there exist many works which are falsely attributed to great masters, such as Kōbō-daishi, Shōkaku, etc., and he proceeds to enumerate a certain number of these apocryphal works. – The phrasing is such that it gives the reader the impression that *almost* all the heretical lineages belonged to the Tachikawa-ryū. This is of course contrary to the facts.

After these remarks, the text raises a new question about a monk named Kōshin 弘真, which is another name of the famous monk Monkan 文觀 (1278-1357), who was favoured by Emperor Godaigo. The interlocutor asks: “There is a monk named 弘真, whose numerous works have a wide circulation; aren’t they false works?” To this question, the author answers with a very long and violent tirade which occupies almost 35 per cent of the entire work. Monkan, he accuses, would have written “more than one thousand scrolls,” which are all forgeries, and are widely spread in Yamato and Echū; and he goes on to state that “the Tachikawa-ryū works are also spread everywhere. The [lineage’s] place of origin was the region of Musashi (an old name for Tokyo, Saitama and a part of Kanagawa); afterwards, it was diffused widely in Yamato and Echū, and it is impossible to count the number of their works. [...] In Kyōto and Kōyasan, it seems that there is much confounding between correct and perverse teachings.” Here again, the turn of phrase is ambiguous; at least, it seems that Yūkai tries to suggest that Monkan belonged to the Tachikawa-ryū lineage as well.

After this long passage on Monkan, Yūkai indicts another monk for having written works containing many “teachings of perverse views” (邪見法門多之): it is Rendō 蓮道 of the Miwa-ryū. And Yūkai goes on to state that “works such as the *Itteki-shō* 一滴鈔 also belong to the teaching of the Tachikawa-ryū. One should consider all these works and oral transmissions as forgeries.” The work entitled “*Itteki-shō*” seems otherwise unknown, and we cannot say if it was written by Rendō or not; of course, we cannot know if Rendō was really a member of the Tachikawa-ryū lineage either.

The last lines of the *Hōkyōshō* consist of doctrinal questions and answers, with some interesting quotations from classical texts, but they don't give any new concrete details about the Tachikawa-ryū or other "heresies."

This is roughly how the *Hōkyōshō* presents itself. We find the name "Tachikawa-ryū" six times in the text, three times in the passage where the author discusses the Tachikawa-ryū itself, one time in the last line about Monkan, and another time in the line following the mention of the work entitled "*Itteki-shō*." As I already pointed out, Yūkai does not say that all the "perverse teachings" are of the Tachikawa-ryū; on the contrary, in one passage, he expressly states that "although they do not belong to the Tachikawa-ryū lineage [this is the other passage in which the name "Tachikawa-ryū" occurs], there are forgeries which are attributed to great masters." But his position seems very equivocal in fact: he qualifies the Tachikawa-ryū as the first "perverse teaching" and suggests that it was the "original source" of all the other teachings of that kind; he appears to assimilate the works of Monkan with those of the Tachikawa-ryū (noting that they spread in the same regions), and he suggests that "works like the *Itteki-shō* 一滴鈔," which would have been written by Rendō, "also belong to the Tachikawa-ryū." Interestingly, some of the apocryphal works which Yūkai declares non Tachikawa-ryū texts are listed in his *Tachikawa shōgyō mokuroku* 立河聖教目録, which, at least from its title, should be considered a Catalog of Sacred Teachings of the Tachikawa-ryū...

What was the purpose of Yūkai when he wrote the *Hōkyōshō*? From the length of the passage dedicated to it, I tend to think that one of his main aims was to attack Monkan and his works. But in fact, there is practically no concrete description of what was specifically wrong with Monkan's doctrine or practice.

The common opinion is that Monkan was the "the restorer" (中興の祖) of the Tachikawa-ryū, and this, on the basis of the *Hōkyōshō*; but if we attentively read this work, we find nothing which can corroborate such an opinion. The only thing which could link Monkan to the Tachikawa-ryū is the statement that Monkan's works were diffused in the same regions as those of the Tachikawa-ryū. But as I will later discuss, Yūkai seems to base himself on earlier sources on the Tachikawa-ryū when he mentions these two regions, Yamato and Echū, where the lineage's works would have been spread. This means that Yūkai himself had no original information about the diffusion of Tachikawa-ryū materials. Did he have any more concrete information about the diffusion of Monkan's works? This would be very doubtful. In these conditions, it seems very likely that Yūkai wanted to induce the opinion that Monkan was guilty, among other crimes, of belonging to the Tachikawa-ryū.

How, then, can the common opinion that Monkan was "the restorer" of the Tachikawa-ryū be formed from the *Hōkyōshō*? I think this is based on the belief, or rather the preconceived idea that the entire *Hōkyōshō* was written in order to attack the Tachikawa-ryū; since the diatribe against Monkan occupies the most impressive and longest part of it, many thought that Monkan was the most important leader of the Tachikawa-ryū.

Now, I will discuss the passage which deals directly with the Tachikawa-ryū. Since it is not very long, I will provide an integral translation. To the question as to how to distinguish the "correct" from the "perverse," the author answers by saying that it is difficult to discriminate between the stone and the jewel, etc., and continues:

But according to one opinion, it is said that master Ninkan 仁寛 (named later Rennin 蓮念), disciple and brother of the deputy archbishop of the Sanboin of Daigoji [that is to say Shōkaku 勝覚 (1057-

1129)], had been convicted of a certain crime, and banished to the country of Izu. In that country, in order to earn his living, he gave instruction of the Shingon teaching to impure lay people who had wives and ate meat, and made them his disciples. Now, there was a master of the Way of Yin and Yang (陰陽師) who lived in Tachikawa in the country of Musashi, who learned the Shingon teaching from Ninkan, and who introduced in it the practices of the Way of Yin and Yang that he had previously studied; mixing correct teaching with perverse teaching, and adulterating the Inner teaching [that is Buddhism] with the External teaching, he created a branch of the Shingon school and named it “Tachikawa-ryū.” This is the original source of [all] the perverse teachings. For a detailed [account of] its books, etc., there is a work in two scrolls written by Seigan-bō of Toyohara temple 豊原寺誓願房, which gives a rough summary. People who need it should have a look at it. Its doctrine is that the secret art of attaining buddhahood within the present body is the path of Yin and Yang between men and women; there is no other [way] to attain buddhahood and the path. This indeed is a false doctrine that they made.

Now, after some quotations from the 大仏頂首楞嚴經 and from the 大日經疏, Yūkai resumes his account on the Tachikawa-ryū. He writes:

Afterward, the Tachikawa-ryū spread in the country of Ecchū, and had two generations of masters, Kakumyō 覚明 and Kakuin 覚印, who visited Kōyasan and sojourned there. At that time, the numerous initiation documents (*injin* 印信) and books of the perverse lineage were diffused [there]; these documents pretend to be Essential Doctrines (*kyōsō daiji* 教相大事) or Oral Transmissions. There are many of them, to this date.

This is practically all of the concrete details that Yūkai has to report on the Tachikawa-ryū in his work – aside from a small detail that he adds later in the last line concerning Monkan, namely that Tachikawa-ryū works could be found in Kyōto as well. I will now try to show that in fact, Yūkai takes almost all the above information from earlier sources, and he has had added almost nothing new to them. There are only two sources on which his account is based: one is the *Juhō-yōjin-shū* by Shinjō, that I mentioned earlier; the other is a work named *Shōryū jō jaryū-ji* 正流成邪流事 by Kaijō 快成. I will begin with this latter work. In fact, this is probably not a separate book, but a very short article (about 500 characters in all) which has been extracted from some unknown source. Kaijō (deceased in 1367 thirteen sixty-seven) was the abbot of the same temple as Yūkai, the Hōshōin 宝性院 on Kōyasan, and was the master of Yūkai’s master; the title of this “article” should be probably read in *yomikudashi*, as “正流邪流に成る事” (that is “How correct lineages become perverse lineages”), and it is preserved as a quotation in the *Tachikawa shōgyō mokuroku* of Yūkai. Much of the information in the *Hōkyōshō* is based on this text by Kaijō; as for the Tachikawa-ryū, here is what Kaijō writes:

The fundamental perverse lineage began from the younger brother of Shōkaku, master Ninkan, [...] (who later changed his name to Rennin 蓮念). He was exiled to Izu, and produced a perverse view. After that moment, the lineage was transmitted from Rennin to Kenren 兼蓮, from Kenren to Kakuin 覚印, from Kakuin to Chōban 澄鑾, and from Chōban to Kakumyō 覚明. Dōhan 道範 (1184-1252), Shinben 真弁 and Eshin 惠深 (d. 1270?) received the transmission of [the *abhiṣeka* of] the Secret Yugi 秘密瑜祇 from Kakumyō; thus, that lineage [of Dōhan, etc.] seems to harbour impure teachings.

As you can see, Kaijō gives here only the lineage of this “perverse” teaching, without any words on its doctrinal or ritual contents. Where Kaijō writes “fundamental perverse lineage,” Yūkai transcribes it as “original source of all the perverse teachings.” The circumstances of the beginning of the lineage (the younger brother of Shōkaku, named Ninkan, who was exiled to Izu, changed his name, and “produced a perverse view”) are practically the same as what Yūkai notes. The name of the monks who transmitted the lineage are not exactly the same, but Kakuin and Kakumyō are mentioned by Yūkai as well. Note that the name of the lineage, “Tachikawa-ryū” does not appear in Kaijō’s account; on the other hand, the name of Dōhan and others, who were monks at Kōyasan, as well as the name of the ritual, the “Secret Yugi,” are omitted in Yūkai’s text (among these Kōyasan monks, Dōhan was a very important scholar, considered as the founder of the Secret nenbutsu tradition). The geographical name “Kōyasan” that we find in Yūkai’s account must come from the place where Dōhan and others lived. Then, the only information that Yūkai added concerns the name of the lineage, “Tachikawa-ryū,” and the defamatory description of Ninkan’s disciple, who would have been a “master of the Way of Yin and Yang” coming from Tachikawa. Yūkai’s account further contributes the region names “Ecchū” and “Kyōto” in which Tachikawa-ryū works would have been spread, and finally the lone sentence on the school’s doctrinal tenets.

Now, I come to the other source of Yūkai, which is the *Juhō-yōjin-shū* of Shinjō. Yūkai refers himself to this work: please recall that there was a sentence saying: “there is a work in two scrolls written by Sengan-bō of Toyohara temple which gives a detailed account of Tachikawa-ryū books.”; the *Juhō-yōjin-shū* is a work in two scrolls, and its author, Shinjō, was called “Seigan-bō of Toyohara temple.” The term “Yin and Yang” appears several times in the *Juhō-yōjin-shū*, precisely in contexts related to the question of sex. The name of the lineage Tachikawa-ryū is also mentioned twice in this work; in one particular passage, Shinjō writes that at the age of twenty-five, “around the summer of the first year of Ennō” (1239 twelve thirty-nine), he received the three *abhiṣeka* from the master Ashō of Hosono in the country of Ecchu (越中国細野の阿聖あさり): they were the “Secret Yugi,” the “[Body of the] natural outcome,” and the “Body of the Dharma” (*himitsu yugi tōru hosshin sanshu no kanjō* 秘密瑜祇等流法身三種の灌頂).” On that occasion, he writes that he “copied all the secret works of the Tachikawa-ryū.” So, we can think that the region name “Ecchū” in the *Hōkyōshō* also comes from the *Juhō-yōjin-shū*. And the place name “Kyōto” can too be explained from a passage of the same *Juhō-yōjin-shū*, where the author recounts his encounter with a practitioner of a special teaching, at Jizō Chapel, at Gojō-bōmon in Rakuyō 洛陽五条坊門地藏堂, during the spring of 1251 twelve fifty-one (“Rakuyō” is another name for the Capital, Kyōto. – I will later address this “special teaching” in more detail).

But more importantly, the only information in Yūkai’s work related to the doctrinal contents of the Tachikawa-ryū is the sentence stating that: “It teaches that the secret art of attaining buddhahood within the present body is the path of Yin and Yang between men and women; there is no other [way] to attain buddhahood and the path.” This is manifestly taken from one of the first sentences of the *Juhō-yōjin-shū*. The latter work begins with the following question:

Question: Recently, felicitous sūtras called the “Three Inner sūtras” have spread throughout the world. In earlier times, these sūtras used to be transmitted only among the abbots of [the Shingon center of] Tōji and the Tendai school, but these days, they have spread so widely that everyone trifles with them in the capital as well as in the countryside. In these sūtras it is said that intercourse with women is the most crucial thing in the Shingon teaching, and that it is the highest among the [practices for] attaining buddhahood within the present body. If one avoids it, then the path to the

accomplishment of the buddhahood is said to be distant...

But what is important – and this is the main point I would like to stress in this talk – is that the teaching criticized by the *Juhō-yōjin-shū* was NOT that of the Tachikawa-ryū.

Now, I must speak more directly about the *Juhō-yōjin-shū*. Composed in 1268 twelve sixty-eight, this work was written by Shinjō, also called “Seiganbō,” who signs himself his work: “the monk living in Toyohara temple in Echizen.” From what he writes, we know that he was born in 1215 twelve fifteen. This is a rather long document in two scrolls, and its contents are fascinating in many regards. Although there may be many exaggerations and occasional false representation of facts, the general tone of the work is very frank and straightforward, and I think we can believe more or less what it says.

The first part of this document is an autobiographical account of the learning of this provincial monk: he began his studies at the age of 18, probably in Echizen, and continued to learn different Shingon rituals and doctrines, in various places, including Kōyasan and Kyōto until 1262 twelve sixty-two. Therefore, his period of learning lasted for almost 30 years. After this introductory passage, the author recounts his encounter with a special teaching that he does not name – but he consistently calls “this teaching” or “that teaching” (*kono hō* 此の法, *kano hō* 彼の法) and also uses the term “perverse teaching” (*jahō* 邪法 or *jakyō* 邪教). He learned this teaching and received its canonical texts. He lists up the titles of these texts. Then he develops a series of critiques against this teaching in which we can find details concerning some of its traditions in relation to its origins and transmission lineages. There is also a very interesting passage where the author expounds his opinion about how such a teaching could have developed. The first scroll ends with a long discussion on the attitude that one should assume when one wants to learn the Shingon teaching in general.

The second scroll seems to have been written some time after the first one. It begins by relating that some people who have read the first scroll criticized the author, for having failed to describe the concrete features of the ritual prescribed by “that teaching”; they questioned whether the author even really knew the ritual, or perhaps he simply wanted to keep it secret. To respond to this criticism, the second scroll supplies a full description of the ritual in question. The first half of the second scroll is entirely dedicated to that description, to which I will return later. After this description, the author gives his own opinion of the ritual (namely, that it is not at all a Buddhist ritual, but a demonic ritual; even if it has some effect, the practitioner will eventually lapse into utter confusion and madness, etc.). Finally, the author expounds some doctrinal reasons as to why “that teaching” cannot be a Buddhist teaching.

I quoted earlier the first passage in which the author mentions the name “Tachikawa-ryū”; the second passage goes as follows: Some time after the summer of 1250 twelve fifty, Shinjō had an opportunity to visit the temple of a monk of his acquaintance Kōamidabutsu 弘阿弥陀仏, in Akasaka, in Echizen. He was repeatedly invited to this monk’s cell, where he found a big bag full of books. Kōamidabutsu opened it and took out many scrolls, more than one hundred in all. Shinjō discovered that they were mainly *orikami* 折紙 (folded pieces of paper containing secret ritual texts) of the Tachikawa-ryū, which were in circulation in Ecchū. However, among these scrolls, there were seven or eight containing what Shinjō referred to as “those Three Inner Sūtras (*kano nai-sanbukyō* 彼の内三部経) and oral traditions of Kikuran 菊蘭の口伝.” Shinjō writes that it is then that he saw these texts for the first time and found them very unusual. He borrowed the scrolls to bring them back to his room and copy them, but there were details in them that were unclear to him.

These two passages (the one about the copies of Tachikawa-ryū works that Shinjō made in 1239 twelve thirty-nine, and the other in which he recounts that he found Tachikawa-ryū *orikami* in the cell of Kōamidabutsu in 1250 twelve fifty) – these two passages show that many texts of the Tachikawa-ryū circulated in Echizen and Ecchū (modern Fukui and Toyama) around the middle of the thirteenth century. Among them, one could occasionally find some famous texts of “that school” (*kano ryū*), but Shinjō does not confound the texts of the Tachikawa-ryū with those of what he calls “that school.” Shinjō found the Three Inner Sūtras and the oral traditions of Kikuran odd or unusual, in spite of the fact that he had copied “all the secret works of the Tachikawa-ryū” ten years earlier.

The strongest testimony for the fact that “that teaching” criticized in the *Juhō-yōjin-shū* was not the Tachikawa-ryū are the transmission lineages described in the first scroll. We must remember here that the “blood lineage” documents (*kechimyaku* 血脈) were the most important and authoritative documents that permitted to identify one’s appertenance to a certain lineage. As the enumeration of the monks names, unknown to most of you, is simply annoying, I will omit it here. Please have a look at the hand-out that you have at your disposition. Shinjō notes that there were two different transmission lineages of “that teaching,” one related to the “Three Inner Sūtras,” and the other to the *abhiṣeka*; the contents of these lineages were totally aberrant; the dates of the listed monks are not consistent; their Shingon branch affiliation (Ono-ryū or Hirosawa-ryū) are randomly distributed and utterly confused. Any learned Shingon monk of the period would easily see that these lineages were forgeries. On the other hand, we have manuscripts which are traceable to the “real” Tachikawa-ryū in all certainty: the lineage that we find in these manuscripts is a very orthodox one; until Shōkaku, this is the normal lineage of the Ono branch. Comparing these lineages, we can surely deduce that “that school” criticized by Shinjō was not the Tachikawa-ryū.

Returning to the *Hōkyōshō*, we can now say that a lineage named “Tachikawa-ryū” did exist, and its founder was probably Ninkan; but the reference to the *Juhō-yōjin-shū* in this context is very misleading. The only concrete detail about the teaching – saying that it taught a sexual doctrine – concerned not the Tachikawa-ryū, but another, more special group which was “that school” criticized in the *Juhō-yōjin-shū*. Yūkai was probably conscious of the fake. Shinjō himself very probably received the transmission of the “real” Tachikawa-ryū. I remind you that in 1239, he received the *abhiṣeka* of the “Secret Yugi” from the master Ashō, and copied “all the secret works of the Tachikawa-ryū.” Now, the name of this *abhiṣeka*, namely the “Secret Yugi” is the same as that of the *abhiṣeka* that Dōhan received from Kakumyō according to Kaijō. This appears to mean that at that moment, Shinjō received the transmission of a Tachikawa-ryū teaching; and this is certainly why he was allowed to copy Tachikawa-ryū works. Thus, Yūkai refers to a work written by a member of the Tachikawa-ryū lineage to criticize the Tachikawa-ryū. In conclusion, we can say that Yūkai had added no new information about the Tachikawa-ryū in the *Hōkyōshō*, but probably confounded on purpose that lineage with “that teaching” which was described and criticized by Shinjō. He used the name “Tachikawa-ryū” in order to simply denigrate it with the label of the most representative of Shingon “heresies,” thereby shifting onto it the responsibility of all “perverse teachings,” which, according to him, taught sexual doctrine. It is possible also that the real purpose of Yūkai was to criticize Kōyasan monks who were successors of Dōhan’s lineage, slandering them for the allegation that their teaching contained a sexual doctrine.

As I mentioned above, there were manuscripts which can be traced back to the Tachikawa-ryū with certainty; these manuscripts, kept in the Kanazawa bunko Library, and some temple libraries on Kōyasan,

have been studied by two scholars, Kushida Ryōkō 櫛田良洪 and Kōda Yūun 甲田宥侘; their conclusion is that it is impossible to find any specially “perverse” doctrines or rituals in these documents. Unfortunately, Kushida and Kōda stopped short of editing and publishing these manuscripts, and as far as I know, nobody else has worked on them. I can only wish that in the near future, they will be edited and published in printed form, and studied extensively.

But even though it was not named “Tachikawa-ryū,” we can think that the teaching described and criticized by Shinjō in his *Juhō-yōjin-shū* was not merely a product of his imagination. Earlier, I referred to the fact that the second scroll of this work contained a full description of that teaching’s ritual. This passage reveals a truly surprising ritual of sexual intercourse: the practitioner must acquire a skull, and thereafter have sex with a woman; he must mix the male and female fluids produced from this intercourse, and smear the skull with that mixture; he must repeat this ritual many times, and decorate the skull with colors, so that it looks like a living head. Then he will have to keep it warm, just like an egg, during a long time. After 7 or 8 years, if the ritual is successful, the skull will come to life and reveal matters of the past, present and future.

As we can understand, the purpose of the skull ritual seems entirely mundane. This is somehow in contradiction with what is said in various passages of the *Juhō-yōjin-shū*, where the topic is the attainment of buddhahood in the present body. Perhaps Shinjō omitted to report more supramundane aspects of “that teaching.” One thing that should be noticed is the fact that the sexual ritual’s final purpose is not to have an orgasm (which would have been assimilated to the felicity of attainment of *nirvāṇa*), but is simply a means in the process that we could call an artificial procreation. All this is, in a sense, an embryological ritual, and we can point out its alchemical character. Nevertheless, all the ritual creates a very strong atmosphere of *eros* and *thanatos*, which evokes some of the extreme forms of the *yoginī-tantra* of later Indian tantrism. Some scholars suggested indeed that this ritual may have been created under some cryptic influence from a later form of Buddhist tantrism; yet, I think it can be explained almost entirely by elements of Japanese esoteric religion – but this will be the subject for another work.

One thing we can wonder about is the kind of religious group which advocated such a teaching. Shinjō writes that “although none of the followers of the “correct schools” of the main temples talks about this teaching, nine out of ten Shingon masters in the countryside believe that this is the essence of Mikkyō.” He repeatedly states that everybody – especially those who reside in the countryside – knows this teaching. This is certainly exaggerated, but it is perhaps true that this teaching was more widespread in the countryside than in main temples. The peculiar character of its transmission lineages – which are manifestly fake – may corroborate this hypothesis; as I already said, learned monks would have very easily seen this as an irregular teaching, but perhaps countryside people could have been more easily convinced. Additionally, Shinjō’s text contains many references to Tendai elements, so it is possible that “that teaching” was not limited to the Shingon school (although all the names listed in the lineages seem to belong to Shingon branches). We cannot know to what extent the skull ritual described by Shinjō was really performed; but if it was performed at all, we should presume that the practitioner was living with a woman. Of course, married monks were not uncommon, but I still think this was not a regular status for a monk. All this tends to indicate a kind of para-religious group of people, who would have lived in the countryside, and on occasion served as magicians or shamans. – But please note that this is only a hypothesis, without any firm foundation.

We can also wonder about how long this teaching could have lasted. In fact, the *Juhō-yōjin-shū* is

not the only source which refers to it; we know that there are two texts by Mujū 無住 (1226-1312), the author of the famous *Shasekishū* 沙石集, in which we find short mentions of it. But we know that Mujū had read the *Juhō-yōjin-shū*, so his mentions are not that relevant. There is also a passage in a Tendai work entitled *Endonkai kiki-gaki* 円頓戒聞書 by a monk named Ejin 惠尋, written around 1263 twelve sixty-three, which seems to refer to the same practice (but this is not very sure). On the other hand, we find the characteristic term “*kikuran* 菊蘭” as a name of a branch having produced forged works on the ritual of Aizen-myō 愛染明王 in the pre-1341 thirteen forty-one Shingon ritual compilation entitled *Byakuhō kushō* 白宝口抄. Finally, there is a reference to the “Three Inner Sūtras” in the *Ise Monogatari Zuinō* 伊勢物語髓腦 which seems to have been written in the first half of the fourteenth century. But after that, we cannot find any clear reference to it. All this appears to indicate that “that school” criticized in the *Juhō-yōjin-shū* existed from the middle of the thirteenth century until the first half of the fourteenth century.

I would have liked to talk about other “sexual heresies” or doctrines of the Middle Ages if I had more time. But I spent already too long time now. I will only say a few more words on what we have learned: it is known that many Mikkyō schools and lineages had some sexual teachings. One of the most important was the Sanbōin-ryū, the lineage which was founded by Shōkaku, the elder brother of the founder of the Tachikawa-ryū, Ninkan. In particular there is evidence of a teaching called the “doctrine of the five positions [of the embryo] in the womb” (*tainai goi setsu* 胎内五位説), which had a lasting influence on pre-modern thought. It was yet another embryological doctrine, stating that the human embryo, resulting from the mixture of the male and female sexual fluids, has the buddha-nature from the beginning. However, as far as I know, there appears to be no clear evidence in extant documents of any actual performance of sexual rituals according to this doctrine. It is known also that a strongly sexualized doctrine was advocated within a certain school of waka exegesis, which produced various works of waka interpretation that were of an esoteric nature. This school is usually named Tameaki-ryū 為顕流 after its initiator, Fujiwara no Tameaki (ca. 1230s to after 1295). One of its most representative texts is the *Ise monogatari zuinō* (author unknown, early fourteenth century?). This very special group sets forth a kind of new religion and was most likely made up in large part of aristocrat poets or scholars. It is possible that they actually practiced sexual rituals. Their doctrine also emphasized the procreative aspect of the sexual process, but in this case, it is the union between man and woman itself which is said to be “nothing other but the *kami* and the *buddha*. (されば神といひ仏といひ、和合より外にはなきなり).” And we must not forget that some of the Ise Shintō texts contain unmistakable sexual imagery.

At the outset, all these doctrines were certainly secret teachings, transmitted only in very intimate circles. But there is a paradoxical phenomenon in secret transmission lineages: that is, even though the lineages tended to split into multiple sub-lineages and become increasingly smaller in terms of followers, monks tended to receive as many transmissions as possible, and thus, the secrecy could not be preserved in a very strict sense. The narrowness of lineages was paired with a great fluidity on the individual level. And when a secret doctrine is committed to paper and circulated, even if the lineage itself become extinct, or rather, even more so, when the lineage ceases to exist, the doctrine itself enjoys widespread circulation. I think this is what happened especially with regard to the *waka* exegesis school Tameaki-ryū; it was probably a very limited group of aristocrats who initiated the movement, in the later half of the thirteenth century; but subsequently, its doctrine became more and more disseminated, and consequently,

trivialized. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Japanese Christian Fabian talks about this in his work of criticism against Japanese religious traditions, half in jest, as if he were ridiculing it.

As to “that school” criticized in the *Juhō-yōjin-shū*, as I already said, it seems that the group which advocated that teaching was of another kind, a kind of group less organized, in which the secrecy was kept perhaps more loosely. The core ritual was so odd and extreme that it could not survive very long time...