The Phoenix Hall at Uji and the Symmetries of Replication

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In 1053 the Japanese nobleman Fujiwara no Yorimichi (990–1074), of the celebrated Fujiwara family of palace aristocrats and aesthetes, witnessed the completion and consecration at his residential temple, Byōdō-in, of a legendary Amitābha Hall. The birdlike configuration of this building yields the name by which it has come to be better known to commentators and worshippers alike, the Phoenix Hall, or Hōōdō (Figs. 1, 2). Situated on the western bank of the Uji River in the scenic town of Uji not far from the ancient capital city of Kyoto, and extensively restored in the twentieth century, the Phoenix Hall is a three-dimensional interpretation of the teachings of an important Pure Land Buddhist scripture, the Kannon Myōju kyō, or Visualization Sutra. As such the Phoenix Hall forms at Byōdō-in a sanctified zone for the worship and celebration of the Buddha Amida, or Amitābha, as manifest in his world-realm Gokusaraku, or Sukhavati, in the western quadrant of the Buddhist cosmos. It is an evocative site, not simply for its physical beauty but also for the enduring human concerns—of life and of family—that have governed its reception in history.

The Phoenix Hall was unprecedented in plan and construction. Unlike most Buddhist architecture of the time, it was not modeled on an earlier temple structure or group of structures, nor did it follow established protocols for an Amītābha Hall. Whereas this was typically either a square building under a pyramidal roof structure, or rectangular in plan with a hip-and-gable roof, the Phoenix Hall was constructed as a square building with galleries extending to each side and a corridor attached at the rear (Fig. 3). Ota Hirotarō and Shimizu Hiroshi have suggested that Yorimichi, who commissioned and financed the Phoenix Hall, also invented it. The rationale for such an idiosyncratic production lies in the importance of the Visualization Sutra to Yorimichi and his family.

In keeping with its formal title Busetsu kan Murōyū Butoku kyō, or The Sutra on Visualization of Murōyū, the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, as Expounded by the Buddha Sakyamuni, the Visualization Sutra explains a set of sixteen visualizations that produce a vision of Amitābha in Sukhāvatī for those aspiring to rebirth there. Aspirants are instructed to contemplate the vision, meditate on Amitābha, and recite his name, thereby earning spiritual merit for future entry into his world-realm. The sutra is visual and visionary in emphasis and has visualization and contemplation of the Buddha as its goals. The initial stages of visualization are intended to generate a feature of Sukhāvatī that appears to the aspirant “whether the eyes are open or shut” (341a3–4, 20) and is then focused upon for deeper contemplation.

The Visualization Sutra is a sermon directed by the Buddha to a woman, the virtuous Idaike, or Lady Vaidehi, who has implored him for rebirth in a pure land to escape her travails “in this polluted and evil place teeming with hells, hungry ghosts, and animals” (341a–b). The Buddha appears before her and her female attendants and, “a golden light radiating from his forehead,” illuminates the cosmos and the pure lands from which she asks him to choose for her rebirth (341b21–27). Lady Vaidehi selects Sukhāvatī, “the place of Amitābha,” and asks the Buddha to teach her how to achieve rebirth there (341b29–341c1). The Buddha smiles, a light of five colors emanating from his mouth, and begins the instruction (341c1–2).

He tells Lady Vaidehi, that through ethical behavior and

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the power of the Buddha, she and other sentient beings "will be able to see that distant Pure Land as though seeing one's own face in a mirror held in the hand" (341c20–21). The first of the sixteen visualizations is that of the sun. "Look at the setting sun," the Buddha says to Lady Vaidehi, "awaken to contemplation, seat yourself properly facing west, and abandon yourself to visualization of the sun" (342a1–2). Twelve visualizations follow by which the physical appearance of Sukhāvatī is described in hallucinatory detail, from its "trees of jewels, earth of jewels, lake of jewels" (342c10–11) to Amitābha himself, a golden colossus with "eyes like the four oceans, pale blue and clear" (343b17–20). Beside Amitābha to right and left stand the bodhisattvas Kanzeon, or Avalokitēśvara, and Daiseishi, or Mahāsthāmaprāpta, who attend him but are also emanations from his body (342c17–18, 344b6). At the end of the thirteenth visualization, whose
The focus is the moment of rebirth when the aspirant awakens atop a lotus flower as its petals open, Lady Vaidahī is instructed to see and contemplate Amitābha as a monumental figure rising above the lake in Sukhāvatī (34a-8b). The remaining three visualizations address the nine grades of rebirth in Sukhāvatī, with emphasis on the type of persons qualified for each grade and the manner in which, at death, they are "welcomed" to the pure land. Aspirants in the upper three grades are greeted by Amitābha, who appears before them surrounded by bodhisattvas and musicians in a pool of light. Holding hands with bodhisattvas are the aspirants brought to the "palace of seven treasures" where Amitābha resides in Sukhāvatī (34a-19, 21–22). Aspirants in the lower grades are welcomed by Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsākārajīrāpaṇa or a golden lotus that shines like the disk of the sun (34a-217, 34a-21). No one is excluded from Sukhāvatī so long as he or she is mindful of Amitābha and chants his name. Even the worst of sinners, those who have killed or been in hell, who have called on Amitābha with a sincere heart are allowed a holy rebirth in Sukhāvatī inside a lotus yet to bloom in the middle of its lake, where they await awakening (34a-28–9). Once the Buddha has taught the sixteen visualizations to Lady Vai-
such a copy in 1134 for the Toba Palace, a complex of residences and temples on the northern bank of the Kamo River just south of Kyoto proper. The structure was named Shōkōmyōin, “Hall of Victorious Radiance,” and when it was dedicated in 1136 it was described as “having been copied after Uji Byōdōin.” Another copy of the Phoenix Hall was constructed several decades later, between 1150 and 1170, by the regional warlord Fujiwara no Hidehira (d. 1187) near his private residence, Kara Mansion, in the distant city of Hiraisumi in what is now southern Iwate Prefecture. Called Muryōkōin, “Hall of Immeasurable Light,” the building stood on the southern bank of the Kitakami River and, like Shōkōmyōin, was described as “a place entirely copied after Uji Byōdōin” (Fig. 6). Neither Shōkōmyōin nor Muryōkōin survive, having been lost to flooding by the Kamo and Kitakami rivers, but much is known about the structures through primary records and excavations.

Architectural copying was uncommon at the time that Shōkōmyōin and Muryōkōin were built. Indeed, the Phoenix Hall is one of the very few monuments in premodern Japan to have been copied and to have been so described in contemporary sources. Scholars on occasion have noted the oddity of the replication of the Phoenix Hall at Shōkōmyōin and Muryōkōin, but there has been little discussion of its possible significance. That two powerful men after Yorimichi, one an emperor and the other a warrior, each built near the premises of their main residences an imitation of the Phoenix Hall raises theoretical issues, from notions of textuality to the work of copying and mimesis, with important ramifications for the study of art and culture in ancient Japan.

14. Chūyōki, 7:180b (Hōen 2/1136.3.23). The ideograph is shō, “copy” or “transcribe.”
15. Azuma Kagami, 354 (Bunji 5/1189.9.17). The ideograph is myō, “copy” or “imitation.”
16. A similar example of architectural copying is documented for Daichō-juin, an Amitābha Hall built by Fujiwara no Kiyohira at Chūsonji in Hiraisumi in 1107, which was replicated in Kamakura in 1192 by Minamoto no Yoshiie and named Yōtokuji (Azuma Kagami, 474, Eikeyō 3/1192.11.20; and Sugiyama, 139–40).
Byōdōin

Fujiwara no Yorimichi belonged to an illustrious family with the economic and political stability to encompass such a monument as the Phoenix Hall. He was the first son of Fujiwara no Michinaga (966–1027), an influential statesman and palace aristocrat whose hold over the monarchy through marriage and kinship ties is legendary. Michinaga married several daughters to reigning monarchs in a tactic that insured him direct control over the princes and emperors born to them as his grandsons, and thereby dominated palace society throughout his maturity. As an aesthete Michinaga is the most widely studied aristocrat of the Heian period (784–1185), and historical tales such as Eigō monogatari, or A Tale of Flowering Fortunes, provide a compelling account of his cultural predilections and his milieu.  

Michinaga constructed several mansions and a number of temples, a practice that culminated in his later years in the temple Hōjōji on the western bank of the Kamo River in Kyoto. Hōjōji no longer exists, but much is known about it from A Tale of Flowering Fortunes and the diaries of Michinaga’s contemporaries. The first structure to be built was an Amitābha Hall called Muryōjūin, “Hall of Amitāyus.” Initiated by Michinaga in 1019 and consecrated in 1020, Muryōjūin measured eleven bays in length and housed nine monumental statues of Amitābha with paintings of the nine degrees of rebirth on its doors. As such it was the first instance of what is known as the Nine-Image Amitābha Hall, in which nine large statues of Amitābha as well as a cycle of paintings called kuhon ūjō zu, “pictures of the nine degrees of rebirth,” were enshrined in an elongated version of the
square Amitābha Hall that had been the standard until that time. The name Murōyōjūin, as well as its statues and paintings, indicate that Michinaga's hall was based on the Sutra on the Adornments of the Realm of Bliss (J. Murōyōjukyō) and the Visualization Sutra (J. Kan Murōyōjukyō). The hall faced east over an artificial lake, in keeping with the scriptural accounts of Amitābha in his world-realm, and is described in glowing terms in A Tale of Flowering Fortunes as a richly appointed and colorful hall "glittering in the setting sun." Michinaga frequented Murōyōjūin for prayers and chanting and died there in 1027, "his gaze fixed on the nine Amitābha images," his hands holding braidcd cords attached to the sculptures.

In 1022, after Michinaga added a Main Hall on the northern bank of the lake as well as other ornate structures around Murōyōjūin, the complex was renamed Hōjōji, "Temple of the Buddhist Law Attained," to accommodate diversification away from Amitābha as the sole focus of worship. By the time of Michinaga's death Hōjōji contained numerous halls dedicated to various Buddha and bodhisattvas and situated around a central body of water (Fig. 7). So lovely as to be described in A Tale of Flowering Fortunes as similar to Sukhāvatī in appearance, Hōjōji also exhibited a number of structural innovations, from extensive use of elongated halls and galleries to their asymmetrical arrangement around a lake after what is known as the shinden mode of domestic architecture. Shimizu Hiroshi has argued that the cumulative effect of the richly ornamented Amitābha and Main halls, the lake, and the gardens was intended to produce at Hōjōji "an illusory world" for the enjoyment of its patrons. Certainly this was its reception among nuns visiting Murōyōjūin in 1022, one of whom was inspired to exclaim, "It's like being in another world!"

Yorimichi succeeded as head of the Fujiwara on Michinaga's death in 1027 and, having served as regent since 1017, enjoyed several decades of authority at court as uncle to the reigning emperors Go Suzaku (1009–1045) and Go Reizei (1025–1068). Yorimichi married his daughter Genshi to Go Suzaku in 1037, but in this maneuver he was not successful in gaining royal heirs, for Genshi died childless in 1039.

24. In 1025–26 Murōyōjūin was moved to a more westerly location to allow new structures to be added along the lake (Sugiyama, 65).
26. For the origins of the shinden mode and an exhaustive study of its evolution and variants as the architectural style favored by the aristocracy for homes and villas, see Ota S., esp. 1–37, 229–63. As defined by Ota (17–21) the term shinden, literally "deep palace," refers to the master quarters of a palace complex, to which access is limited to the resident and his or her family.
29. Sakai M., Kōzoku ni no kōshō, Tokyo, 1989, 109–15; and Hurst, 95, 101–6. While Hurst claims (102) that the Fujiwara house may have "enjoyed greater power and glory under Yorimichi than it had under

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1044 a prince called Takahito, unrelated to Yorimichi's lineage and thus largely beyond his influence, was named to the imperial succession by an ailing Go Suzaku. Although Yorimichi objected vehemently, he was outmaneuvered at court by rivals, and his authority began to wane as a new regime took hold. On Takahito's ascension as Emperor Go Sanjō in 1067 Yorimichi retired from the regency after a long tenure marked by difficulties in the later years.29

Ōta Seirōdescribes Yorimichi as having been more inclined to aesthetic and cultural pursuits than Michinaga, whose real interests lay “in the accumulation of political power” and not, as often argued, in the literary and visual arts.30 In 1021 Yorimichi completed construction of one of the most important residential complexes of the period, Kayanoin, a mansion in Kyoto proper a few blocks east of the imperial compound. In plan Kayanoin Mansion departed significantly from shinden convention, for its principal residences and pavilions stood entirely surrounded by the waters of a lake. According to visitors in 1021 the lake “shone like a mirror.”31 For the authors of A Tale of Flowering Fortunes Kayanoin Mansion was “splendid beyond description” and “seemed to belong to another realm.”32

With his older sister Fujwara no Shōshi (988–1074), or Jōdōin, Yorimichi also maintained and expanded the Hōjōji complex. He sponsored the repair and consecration in 1030 of its five-storied pagoda, which had collapsed during a typhoon in 1028.33 Earlier Shōshi had dedicated Tōhokuin, or “Hall on the Northeast,” a five-bay square Circumambulation Hall with flanking galleries that, situated in the northeastern corner of Hōjōji, enshrined a statue of Amitābha with the attendant bodhisattvas Kannon, Seishi, Jizō, or Ksitigarbha, and Ryūju, or Nāgārjuna. Tōhokuin formed a pair with Saihokuin, or “Hall on the Northwest,” a similar but smaller structure built in 1021 by Shōshi’s mother, Minamoto no Rinshi (1040–1114), in the northwest corner of Hōjōji.34 In the third month of 1050 Yorimichi

Michinaga,” circumstances during Yorimichi’s tenure, from his daughter’s failure to produce a royal heir to the emergence of a rival faction for control over the imperial line of succession, seem to indicate otherwise; see Takeshi R., Ritsuryō to kioku ahen, ii, Tokyo, 1958, 303–10.

30. Ōna S., 235–36.
31. Shōzō, 6:47 [Jan 1/1021.9.9]. For the Kayanoin Mansion, see Ōna S., 244–52, 276–78.
33. Sugiyama, 69, 73.
34. Ibid., 61, 74. The Circumambulation Hall, or ōjō-yūdō, was one of several types of meditation hall used in Tendai Buddhism. It served for one of the principal forms of meditation promoted by the Tendai school, called ōjō-zanmai, or “Ambulatory Concentration,” which involved regular ninety-day seclusion in a circumambulation hall for chanting, circumambulation, and meditation focusing on Amitābha. As such it served the Pure Land movement within Tendai and is the prototype of the Amitābha Hall, or Amida-do. In most cases its object of worship was an image of Amitābha accompanied by four bodhisattvas and, often, paintings of scenes of rebirth.

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added a new structure to Hōjōji, a Lecture Hall north of the Main Hall with a seven-bay main building and flanking arcades.\(^5\)

On Michinaga's death Yorimichi inherited a number of residences and estates, among them a villa at Uji.\(^6\) Sometimes around 1051, as he was approaching sixty years of age, Yorimichi decided to turn the villa into a temple by converting its main residence into a space for worship and adding new structures around it.\(^7\) In the third month of 1052 the Main Hall was consecrated and the villa given the name Byōdōin, "Temple of Equanimity," possibly in reference to the title of an early translation of the Sutra on the Adornments of the Realm of Bliss.\(^8\) Although no longer extant, the Main Hall is known to have consisted of four buildings linked by covered walkways in a garden setting overlooking the Uji River (Fig. 8). One building, housing a monumental statue of Dainichi, or Mahāvairocana, served as the main place of worship, and the other three were either used as chapels or lived in by Yorimichi and his guests.\(^9\)

The Phoenix Hall was consecrated a year later in the third month of 1053 in a picturesque setting of water and gardens just south of the Main Hall.\(^10\) Although no detailed record was made, prompting a complaint by Emperor Toba in 1134,\(^11\) its construction is known through descriptions in primary documents. Architectural historians are confident that much of the hall's original external appearance has been preserved, despite regular restorations and alterations since the late fifteenth century. Today a vast body of scholarship exists on the hall, its garden, and their contents.\(^12\)

The Phoenix Hall occupies an artificial island in a lake that once extended well north and west of its current location to form a waterway isolating the Phoenix Hall complex from that of the Main Hall. At present only a narrow canal separates the island from the bank of the lake to the rear of the Phoenix Hall, but Murakoa Shō and others have shown that in 1053 the distance was greater and the hall was indeed surrounded on all sides by pools of water.\(^13\) Small bridges connected the Phoenix Hall to the northern and southern shores of the lake, but there is no evidence that a bridge spanned this between the front of the hall and the eastern shore. It is believed that the shape of the lake conformed to the Sanskrit "gīrman syllable" identified with Amitābha.\(^14\)

\(^{55}\) Sugiyama, 73–74.

\(^{56}\) Michinaga had purchased the villa from an associate in 999 (Shōjō, 2:55; Chōho 1/999, 9). For Uji as an enclave of aristocratic residences, see Sugiyama, 94–95, and Fukuyama, 7.

\(^{57}\) The conversion of residences into temples was common in the 11th and 12th centuries. For example, the home of Ikubōmon in, the daughter of Sharakawa, was converted into a "Buddhist chapel" in 997; see Hoshizumichi, in Kuroki K., ed., Shinsetsu zōdo kokushi taisei, xi, Tokyo, 1929, 44 (Jōjoku 1/997, 10). It is not known when Yorimichi actually initiated work on the Phoenix Hall, but accounts of other large-scale Amitābha Halls suggest that at least a year was required for construction. Michinaga had pledged to build Muryōjūn around the seventh month of 1019, some ten months before its consonation in the third month of 1020 (Sugiyama, 59–60; and Shōjō, 5:171, Kanme 3/1019, 7.17). Construction of the main Amitābha Hall at Sonnōji in Kyoto took two years, and that of a Nine-Image Hall at Rengezō, also in Kyoto, nine months (Shōjō, 2:312b, Kōza 5/1103, 12.26; 5:626, Chōjō 2/1105, 13.19; 6/101b, Daži 4/1129, 8.3; 21a, Daži 5/1130, 7.2)

\(^{58}\) Fūjiyoshi, 292 (Enshō 7/1052, 2.28). The term Byōdō, or "Equanimity," may derive from the title of the second translation into Chinese of the Sukhavatiyāvatara-sūtra, the Murol Shōji byōdōkakuyi, or more commonly Byōdōkakuyi (C. Wuhang Qingqing pingdengju jing), by the Indian monk Lokaksrma.

\(^{59}\) Shimizu, 1988, 21; Shimizu, 1992, 75–77; Sugiyama, 96–97; and Fukuyama, 10–11. The figure of Mahāvairocana, which measured seven
In plan the Phoenix Hall consists of a center chapel with flanking L-shaped galleries and a "tail" corridor at the back (Figs. 2, 3). Forming a shallow U-shape, the hall opens eastward over the lake and faces the Uji River. The galleries, ranged along a north-south axis that includes the center chapel, terminate on each side in extensions to the east. The "tail" extends westward from the chapel and spans the lake. This "extremely unusual plan," as Itô Shūrō describes it, is not seen in earlier Amitābha Halls, nor was it utilized in other temple or residential architecture through the eleventh century. However, Yorimichi may have designed the Phoenix Hall with earlier projects in mind, such as Kayanouin Mansion and the Lecture Hall at Hōjōjū. At both sites the principal structure was U-shaped in plan, and at Kayanouin Mansion the lake completely surrounded the main domicile.45

The center chapel of the Phoenix Hall is a one-story building with a hip-and-gable roof. A skirt roof extends around the chapel and gives the hall the appearance of having two stories. Viewed from the exterior the chapel appears to be square, but its sanctuary measures three bays across and only two bays deep (approximately 33 × 26 ft., or 10 × 8 m).46 In the sanctuary is a large raised dais set against a reredos formed by two pillars. A space of approximately 10 feet (3 m) separates the dais from the walls of the sanctuary except at the back, where the skirt roof has been incorporated into the sanctuary to yield a space of approximately 6½ feet (2 m).

The galleries to each side of the center chapel form freestanding open arcades with turrets at either end. Each gallery measures five bays, or approximately 46 feet (14 m) from north to south, and three bays, or approximately 29½ feet (9 m) along its eastward extension. The galleries, under a gable roof, have a very low second story—less than 6½ feet (2 m) from floor to ceiling—open on all sides. The turrets also have very low second stories, each under a pyramidal roof.47 The "tail" is attached directly to the chapel, from which it is accessible through a set of doors behind the dais. About 13 feet (4 m) wide, it extends for seven bays, or approximately 65½ feet (20 m), and opens to the outside through double doors on the west bank of the lake. Unlike the galleries, the "tail" is enclosed by plaster walls, although cusped windows and lattices provide light.

The sanctuary of the chapel is occupied by a monumental statue of Amitābha seated on a lotus-blossom pedestal atop the dais (Fig. 9). The gilt-wood image, carved by the

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9 Interior of Phoenix Hall, with statue of Amitābha (Amida) by Jōchō, 1053 (photo: Asukaen, courtesy Byōdōin temple)
10 Mandorla of Amitābha, Phoenix Hall, with detail of Dainichi (Mahāvairocana) (photo: Asukaen, courtesy Byōdōin temple)

11 Mudrā of Concentration, detail of Amitābha, Phoenix Hall (photo: Asukaen, courtesy Byōdōin temple)

12 Diagram of wall and door paintings, interior of Phoenix Hall (photo: Asukaen, courtesy Byōdōin temple)
renowned sculptor Jōchō and consecrated with the hall in 1053, measures 110 inches (278.8 cm) in height, or nearly 16 feet (5 m) including the lotus pedestal and dais, and 92 inches (254.2 cm) at the width of the knee. A flamelike mandorla arches over the statue from behind and brushes the canopied ceiling. A small sculpture of Mahāvairocana occupies the crest of the mandorla (Fig. 10), and twelve figures of what are identified as Hiten, “Hovering Celestials,” are ranged from top to bottom on each side. The Amitābha form a mudrā, or symbolic gesture, called Concentration, which represents a state of deep meditation involving “the suppression of all spiritual disquiet in order to arrive finally at the complete concentration on the truth” (Fig. 11). In a significant departure from custom there are no attendant bodhisattvas, nor were they originally, and the Amitābha rests alone, enormous and golden, within its sanctuary.

On the doors and lower wall panels of the sanctuary are the remains, or in some cases later restorations, of a cycle of paintings that depict the nine degrees of rebirth in Sukhāvati as stipulated in the Visualization Sutra (Fig. 12). Cartouches with quotations from the sutra identify scenes. On the three pairs of doors along the east wall, directly in front of the Amitābha sculpture, are remnants of paintings that illustrate the upper three grades of rebirth (Fig. 13); on the doors and panels of the north wall are depictions of the upper two of the three middle grades; on the south wall and doors, the upper two of the three lower grades (Fig. 14); and, on the back of the reredos, the lowest of the middle and lower grades. On each pair of doors is a statue of Amitābha in the sky with an entourage of bodhisattvas and celestial beings, either arriving over a landscape of low hills to claim an aspirant for rebirth, or, in the single case of the south doors on the east wall, departing with an aspirant toward Sukhāvati. Behind the Amitābha, on the pair of doors on the west wall that open to the “tail” corridor, there is a depiction (now barely visible) of the setting sun in what appears to be a representation of the first of the sixteen visualizations.

The upper panels of the north and south walls to each side of the Amitābha sculpture, and those not directly behind the reredos to the rear, are occupied by fifty-two relief sculptures of bodhisattvas averaging 24–28 inches (60–70 cm) in height (Fig. 15). Each figure is depicted atop a cloud. Most of the bodhisattvas are shown playing flutes, drums, cymbals, lutes, and other musical instruments, or dancing arms extended with scarves in hand. Other figures hold their hands in gestures of prayer. Since the twelfth century at least, the relief sculptures, which appear to be flying in formation around the Amitābha image, have been called Kūyō Bosatsu, “Reverent Bodhisattvas.” The iconography is unclear, although most scholars identify the bodhisattvas as representing the retinue of Amitābha in Sukhāvati or when he ventures to earth to welcome aspirants to the Pure Land.

It is clear that the Visualization Sutra is at once the iconographical template for the Phoenix Hall and the scripture whose principal teachings the building illuminates in three dimensions. From the lake and gardens to the palatial hall itself, where a radiant figure of Amitābha is shown meditating among pictures of rebirth in his world-realm, the Phoenix Hall recalls in numerous ways the descriptions of Sukhāvati as an object of visualization, contemplation, and desire in the Visualization Sutra. Since there are no known articulations of the sutra in architecture or as a three-dimensional mandala, it is likely that Yorimichi, in planning the Phoenix Hall, relied at least in part on pictorializations, among them transformations of a type similar to the Taima Mandala.

The Taima Mandala is based on an influential commentary on the Visualization Sutra by the Chinese monk Shandao (613–681). As Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis and others have shown, its precedents are the painted transformations of the Visualization Sutra at the Dunhuang caves in China, such as the early eighth-century mural on the north wall of Cave 217. In the Taima Mandala Amitābha is shown presiding over Sukhāvati from the center of an architectural complex that is U-shaped in plan and has flanking arcades and turrets (Figs. 4, 5). A lake and dance platforms occupy the area in front of the complex, and behind it celestial sages hover in the sky.

The mudrā formed by the hands of the Amitābha in the Taima Mandala, Turning the Wheel, indicates that he is preaching. Bodhisattvas in attitudes of listening and prayer are shown gathered around him, while dancers and musicians perform on the platforms in the foreground, and the newly reborn cluster atop lotus blossoms or bathe in the waters of the lake. Along the edges of the scene, in the side and bottom registers of the mandala, are candelike represen-

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49. Some of the Hiten are of later date, see Konno T., “Kōbō,” in Byōdō in taikan, n. 44.
50. Saunders (as in n. 44), 87–48.
51. Oku H., 15. Typically, a statue of Amitābha was accompanied by smaller images, sculpted or painted, of Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, as at Mountjoy.
52. During restorations in 1966–71 the original door paintings were removed and placed for safekeeping in the temple museum, to be returned later on completion of the project. Discussion of the Phoenix Hall paintings is based on Byōdō in taikan, n. 33, except where otherwise indicated. For the paintings and their reconstructions see ibid., pls. 2–5, supp. pls. 16–19. For a detailed analysis of the paintings in connection with the Visualization Sutra, see Taguchi E., Mekō Nihon no hyōka, ex. Tokyo, 1982, 116–37; for their significance in the emergence of a Japanese landscape aesthetic, see Akiyama T., “The Door Paintings in the Phoenix Hall of the Byōdō in as Yumato,” trans. Timon Screech, Artibus Asiae, XVI, nos. 1–2, 1993, 144–66.
53. Taguchi (as in n. 52), 49; and Mizuno, 63..Minamotono no Morotoki (1077–1136), supervisor of the replication of the Phoenix Hall at Shōkōshōin in 1134, referred to the relief sculptures as Kūyō Bosatsu (Chōbōk, 2, 191, Chōbōkshōkōshōin in 1134 1114, 10).
54. For the commentary by Shandao, see Ken Murayama-kutsu kōto (C. Kwan Wudangkun fu yidu zhai) in Takakusu J. and Watanabe K., eds., Taitoku denshō Dansha, xxxvii, Tokyo, 1926, 245–78. For Taima mandala precedents, see ten Grotenhuis, 1983 (as in n. 10), 132–52; and Yamamoto K., Jōchōkyō kyō, Tokyo, 1975, 185–202.
tations of key points of instruction in the Visualization Sutra, with the story of Lady Vaidhe in a vertical strip on the left, the thirteen visualizations on the right, and, along the bottom, the nine degrees of rebirth. The first visualization, that of the setting sun, is shown "behind" the Amitābha figure in the upper right corner of the picture.55

Formal and iconographic features link the Phoenix Hall directly to the Taima Mandala and its predecessors in China, as many have noted.56 The center chapel, with its sculpture of Amitābha atop a lotus, is flanked by arcades with turrets, conforms to a U-shaped ground plan, and opens onto a lake. The sanctuary interior recalls, in splendor and subject, the imagery of the Taima Mandala and other transformations of the Visualization Sutra. On the three pairs of doors directly in front of the statue of Amitābha, itself a golden representa-

tion of the god at rest in his Pure Land, are depictions of the three upper grades of rebirth. An image of the sun occupies the doors directly behind the sculpture, where it aligns in the spring and summer months with the path of the sun, which at twilight sets behind the Phoenix Hall to silhouette it against the sky.57 The lake, its surface mirroring the hall, was once the scene of music and dance on boats or platforms, as during a celebration of the Lotus Sutra staged by Empress Kan'shi (d. 1127) in 1118.58

The Phoenix Hall and Taima Mandala share a common heritage in pictorialization of the Visualization Sutra for purposes of worship and meditation in the system of praxis generally identified as Pure Land Buddhism. In the eleventh century and for much of the twelfth this was still a movement within the larger philosophical frame of Tendai Buddhism,

55. I am grateful to Professor Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis for sharing with me her analysis of dimensionality and spatial configurations in the Taima Mandala.
56. Tanaka, 75; Ōta H., 15; Shimizu, 1992, 79–82; and Ōta S., 270–73.
57. Such alignments were attempted at a number of temples based on Pure Land scripture; see Yamao T., "Tokushū: Komō to byakudō, Raigō no kaimetsu," in Hamashima M., ed., Zaizetsu Nihon no bunbutsu, iii, Tokyo, 1989, 167.
58. Chōjoku, 5768–80a (Gen'ei 1/1118 intercalary 9.22); I have based death dates for empresses and women of the aristocracy on entries in this, Denryaku, and other diaries, since few biographical dictionaries or other

secondary sources supply them. For a list of empresses and princesses, see Chōjoku, 6:164–65 (Daijō 5/1130.2.21).
59. Tendai Esotericism, or Taimitsu, is distinguished from Shingon Esotericism, or Tōmitsu, whose primary focus is Mahāvairocana. For a recent survey of Esotericism with emphasis on its visual culture, see Sekiguchi, M., ed., Zaizetsu Nihon no bunbutsu, ii, Tokyo, 1988, esp. 212–55. For the integration of Pure Land and Esoteric worship practices, see Hayami T., Hatajikunō ron, Tokyo, 1987, 187–201.
60. Fukuyama, 15; and Shimizu, 1992, 71. Byōdōin is identified as "independent" in the current directory of temples in Japan (Nihon Jinn Meikan Kankō Kai, ed., Nihon jin meikan, i, Tokyo, 1982, 1207).
and it did not emerge as an independent institution until the late twelfth century. Pure Land is nonetheless the system of belief to which the Phoenix Hall is primarily linked by reason of its iconography. In Tendai Buddhism, however, the Pure Land movement was integrated with worship of the Lotus Sutra, Tendai’s fundamental scripture, and, most important, with what is called Tendai Esotericism. In this form of Esotericism the Buddha Mahâvairocana, as the root Buddha-presence of the universe and the source of secret teachings not accessible to the uninitiated, is merged with Sâkyamuni, the Buddha of the Lotus Sutra, as the focus of worship and ritual.  

Byôdôin, now independent, was a Tendai temple in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Scholars have emphasized its Tendai Pure Land aspect, with Shimizu Hiroshi arguing that the Phoenix Hall, and not the Main Hall, was in fact the center of the complex.  

But it is important to remember that Yorimichi, like Michinaga at Hôjoji, situated his Amitâbha Hall in close proximity to a Main Hall that enshrined a monumental sculpture of Mahâvairocana, where worship would have required the performative rituals of Tendai Esotericism, such as chanting of mystical formulas, enactment of symbolic poses and hand gestures, and meditation involving visualization and concentration. Indeed Esotericism, specifically mediational practice associated with Mahâvairocana, is essential to an understanding of the Phoenix Hall as a cultural document.

Matsura Masaki has proposed that the Phoenix Hall was designed as a hall of worship for Amitâbha as an emanation of Mahâvairocana. He believes that the Kuyô Bosatsu represents the bodhisattvas of the Hachî Mandala, or Mandala of Eight, expounded in the Maryôju Nyorai kanyô kôyû gikô, or Manual of Rituals for the Visualization of Amîtâyus. According to the manual, worship of the Mandala of Eight is a means of accumulating spiritual merit and, ultimately, attaining rebirth in Sukhavati.

If a lay practitioner or a monk seeks to be born in the Pure Land, they must at once receive the teachings of the mandala through its worship, whether by chanting according to the instructions of a teacher, or by preparing a purified altar in a fine spot or place of residence, and hanging above it a Mandala of Eight. (Manual of Rituals, 67c6–10)  

The aspirant then prays, chants, and presents offerings of incense, flowers, candles, and other items to the mandala.

The Mandala of Eight is explained in iconographic manuals such as Zuzhoshi and Besson zukki, both completed in the late twelfth century but drawn from much earlier sources. Often called an Amîtâbha Mandala, it bears at its center an image of Amîtâyus depicted as an emanation of Mahâvairocana, his hands gesturing Concentration and his body clothed in the princely garb emblematic of the Cosmic Buddha. Around Amîtâyus are the eight Esoteric bodhisattvas who appear with Mahâvairocana in other configurations. Like the Taisô Mandala, the Mandala of Eight has roots at Dunhuang and in Central Asia, and by Yorimichi’s day it was used in the Esoteric rituals of Tendai Pure Land.

Not all scholars accept Matsura’s argument, but most agree that Esoteric elements are integrated into the Pure Land imagery of the Phoenix Hall  

61 The principal object of worship in the Main Hall at Hôjoji was a sculpture of Mahâvairocana that stood some 29½ ft. (9 m) in height (Sugiyama, 62; Shimizu 1992, 46; and Tule, u, 534–55 [Ego monogatari, 269–70]).

62 Matsura, 39–45. Matsura begins his argument (38–59) by noting that a number of the relief sculptures have ink inscriptions that identify them as Esoteric bodhisattvas, e.g., Kongôsatsu, or Vajrasattva (Fig. 15); see also Mizuno, 62–63.

63 Zuzhoshi, in Takaku J. and Watanabe K., eds., Zuzhoshi daceki yosai, in, Tokyo, 1992, 8c; Besson zukki, in ibid., 96c, 103a; Yorimichi M., Mandala no kumôko shokoku, Tokyo, 1991, 78–79, 144–45; and Matsura, 59–60. For the names of the eight bodhisattvas, which vary, see Matsura, 39, 45–44. For a 15th-century example of the Mandala of Eight, see Sawa R., ed., Môkô hyoju taiseki, in, Tokyo, 1984, fig. 65.

64 Mizuno, 62–63; Nashikawa S. and Mizuno K., “Hôôdo no chokoku,” in Byôdôin taiseki, u, 8–10. Both the Phoenix Hall and its Amitâbha sculpture are treated as monuments of Esoteric Buddhism in Sawa R., ed., Môkô hyoju taiseki (as in n. 63), u, 224–25. Recently Sudô Hiroshi has described the Phoenix Hall as a form of Amîtâbha mandala (Sudô H., Amû shûju raijika, Tokyo, 1994, 84).
Law through 'perspicacity' (myōkan), which vouchsafes the understanding of the whole teaching." It is also the mudrā of Amitābha as an emanation of Mahāvairocana in a state of deep concentration that through its catatonic singularity creates and binds the universe, a notion reminiscent of the unified field of particle physics.

There is evidence that, at the Phoenix Hall, the conflation of Amitābha with Mahāvairocana was intentional. The sculpture of Amitābha certainly lends itself to interpretation as a symbolic emanation of Mahāvairocana in the Main Hall nearby. The mudrā of the small statue attached to the peak of the mandorla of the Amitābha figure, Wisdom Fists, indicates that it is the Mahāvairocana of the Diamond World, or Vajradhātu. As such it represents the adamantine wisdom of the Cosmic Buddha, of which the universe is formed. Ritual convention and iconography stipulate its juxtaposition with a Mahāvairocana of the Womb World, or Gharbadhātu, the noumenal realm of knowledge, and indeed such is provided in the Amitābha, who is an emanation of that form of Mahāvairocana. It is also likely that the solar imagery of the Phoenix Hall, from the sun on the doors behind the Amitābha to its orientation toward the track of the setting sun, encompasses the symbolism of Mahāvairocana as the Buddha solaris.  

Visualization, contemplation, concentration, and the pursuit of a transformative state of meditation govern the system of signification at the Phoenix Hall in its Pure Land and Esoteric dimensions. Not only is the Visualization Sutra a scripture about meditation, but the symmetry of Amitābha and Mahāvairocana itself draws on the notion that pure concentration yields a unified ontological and phenomenological state. The moon disk, or gachirin, sealed within the sculpture of Amitābha since the time of its consecration, belongs to this order of meaning (Fig. 16). On its face are written in classical Siddham script the two mystical formulas, one "lesser" and the other "greater," chanted during meditation on Amitābha as prescribed in the Manual of Rituals. That the Phoenix Hall rises above a lake whose shape once recalled the germ syllable for Amitābha further encourages a meditational interpretation. It is through concentration on this vow—"the ah" of both Amitābha and Mahāvairocana—that awakening to Buddhahood occurs, for, according to the Dainichikyō, or Great Sun Sutra, it is "the heart and mind of all mantras."

A meditational agenda at the Phoenix Hall raises issues of intentionality. Mindful of the hall's Pure Land focus and the representations of "welcoming" scenes on its doors, scholars have assumed that the sanctuary was used for nenbutsu, or Buddha-invocation, during which the name of Amitābha is chanted repeatedly by aspirants either stationary before an icon of Amitābha or circumambulating it. Such nenbutsu is encouraged, as part of contemplation of Amitābha, in the Visualization Sutra and other Pure Land texts, as noted, and it was introduced to aristocrats of Michinaga's generation through the teachings of the Tendai monks Ryōgen (912–985) and Genshin (942–1017). In 985 Genshin compiled a collection of essays and quotations from scripture called Ōjō yōsha, or Essentials of Rebirth, in which were laid out the prerequisites and means to rebirth in Sukhavatti. Through the eleventh and twelfth centuries this was used as a sourcebook for Pure Land imagery and practice, and it is recognized as having contributed to the popularity among aristocrats of nenbutsu as a religious rite.

Nenbutsu in the time of Yorimichi, as it does today,
involved performative worship. Chanters do not necessarily sit quietly before an image of Amitābha, and indeed circumambulation, prostration, and even ecstatic dance have always been encouraged. 72 It is true that Michinaga, engaged in nenbutsu at Muryōjun, secluded himself in a narrow space in front of the main Amitābha, but he was extremely ill at the time. 73 More typical were nenbutsu rites such as those held regularly at Hossōji, when devotees, among them emperors and empresses, entered the Amitābha and Circumambulation halls to chant and pray. 74

The structural idiosyncrasies of the Phoenix Hall militate against too ready an identification of its sanctuary as a ritual space for nenbutsu in the standard manner. Comfortable movement around the large Amitābha is difficult for more than one person, and circumambulation around the hall is discouraged by the existence of the lake and by the layout of the building itself. The Amitābha seems withdrawn and distant despite its lovely visage, not at all the welcoming manifestation of a Buddha to be celebrated through chant and song. It presents instead a figure of pure meditation, to which the solemn mudrā bears witness. There is no evidence that the sanctuary of the Phoenix Hall was used for organized nenbutsu either in the time of Yorimichi or later.

Across from the Phoenix Hall, on the eastern bank of the lake, are the foundations of a structure identified as the Little Palace, or Kogosho, that is mentioned in various sources as the vantage from which Yorimichi and his heirs gathered to observe the structure and its garden. Such viewing of the Phoenix Hall was crucial to its role at Byōdōin, with virtually all visitors to the complex making a stop at the Little Palace. Indeed, the organized viewing of the Phoenix Hall from a distance, usually at the Little Palace but occasionally from the banks of the lake, was the principal modality of its reception. The Phoenix Hall was not used for the main ceremonies at Byōdōin, which invariably took place in the Main Hall or at other structures. When it did figure in activities at the temple, as in the celebration of the Lotus Sutra sponsored by Empress Kanshi in 1118 mentioned earlier, the Phoenix Hall served largely as a backdrop for the monks, courtiers, musicians, and dancers gathered in front of it or along its open galleries, on the shores of the lake, and in boats and on platforms on the lake itself. During such festivities Kanshi and her entourage watched from the Little Palace. 75

It has been suggested that the Phoenix Hall was the private oratory of Yorimichi, 76 accessible only to him, and by definition outside the framework of more public Buddhist ceremonial. Like Michinaga at Muryōjun, Yorimichi may have retreated behind a set of screens set up inside the Phoenix Hall directly in front of the Amitābha, to chant and pray in seclusion. Certainly the paintings would have been conducive to sustained reflection on rebirth in Sukhāvati and thus intense self-criticism and self-cultivation. Possibly Yorimichi entered the sanctuary through its west doors, having traversed the "tail" corridor as the most direct route from his residence in the vicinity of the Main Hall, to engage there in prayer and meditation directed to personal needs and goals.

The idea that the Phoenix Hall was intended to serve Yorimichi "in private" may account for the anomalies of its construction, as Ōta Hirotarō, Ōta Seiroku, and Shimizu Hiroshi suggest when they describe the building as an "invention" dictated by circumstances and protocols not typical of other architectural projects, even those engendered by Yorimichi himself. 77 Yorimichi certainly drew on a variety of sources for the hall, from palace architecture in China to the audience halls of the imperial compound in Kyoto. 78 Its parallels with the Kayanoin Mansion, noted by most scholars, 79 confirm the presence of a domestic component. The sources for the actual design of the Phoenix Hall, such as transformations of the Visualization Sutra or manuals of Pure Land imagery, are not known. Yorimichi may have collected such materials from visiting Chinese merchants, who on occasion sold works of art to the Japanese royal family and to courtiers. 80 Possibly versions of the Taishō Mandala or other Pure Land mandalas were available to him through family or temple connections.

The result was an architectural transformation at the Phoenix Hall where form and function literally embodied the teachings of the Visualization Sutra. Shimizu notes in this context that the Phoenix Hall is the first example in Japan of a building meant to be appreciated entirely from its exterior. 81 The position of the Little Palace across the lake from the main façade supports his contention. Even today a glimpse of the face of the Amitābha through the oval window

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72. Shimazu, 90; 77; Shimizu, 99; 88, 21; and Chiwaki, 78-81 (Gen'ei 1/118.8.20). On visits in 1132 and 1134 Emperor Toba viewed the Phoenix Hall from a route along the shore of its lake and from the Little Palace, as did Emperor Go Shirakawa in 1158 (Chōshi 6/332a; Chōshi 1/1132.9.24; Chōshi 2/208b, Chōshi 3/1134.5.15; and Hershens, 3.51a-b.5; Hogen 5/1158.10.18). For a reconstruction of the formal route of access at Byōdōin, see Shimizu, 1992, 71-72. For ceremonies in the Main Hall and other chapels, see Furiyama, 328 (Kani 2/1098.2.22; Chiwaki, 1/298a (Kabō 2/1095.9.30); and Domurah, 1/204 (Kōwa 5/1103.3.11), 4-185 (Eikyū 5/1115.9.30); 258 (Eikyū 4/1116.9.19).
73. Ōta H., 15. Akiyama (as in n. 11), 15, maintains that the painting on the eastern face of the reredos, behind the Amitābha sculpture, was commissioned by Yorimichi toward the end of his life as a confirmation of his personal devotion to Amitābha. The scene shows three men with offerings to the Buddha. The role of the Phoenix Hall as Yorimichi's principal prayer chapel, or phaladai, is by no means certain; Shimizu, 1992, 74-75, has emphasized that the phaladai was in fact part of the Main Hall complex.
74. Ōta H., 16-17; Ōta S., 274; and Shimizu, 1992, 79.
75. Ōta H., 17; Tanaka, 76-79; Shimizu, 1992, 79; and Ōta S., 265-70, 269, 270.
77. See, e.g., Murao, 70; and Ōta H., 17.
78. For contact between Kyoto aristocrats and Chinese merchants, see Tsuchini (as in n. 37), 23 (Eikyū 1/1064.10.3, Eikyū 3/1048.8.11), 24 (Eikyū 5/1050.9.17); Nakayama, in Koretsu K., ed., Shimizu Chōda kōshoku tokai, xi, 1929, 234 (Chōwa 4/1015.2.12); and Sōkō, 8.131-32 (Chōgen 2/1029.3.2). Yorimichi also corresponded with Japanese monks studying in China, see Shimizu, 1992, 283 (Chōgen 5/1032.12.25).

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in the lattice of the central doors to the Phoenix Hall, no doubt designed with such an effect in mind, stimulates prayers, nenbutu, and exclamations of admiration from beholders on the eastern shore of the lake (Fig. 17).

The Phoenix Hall thus becomes the focal point of the forms of visualization and meditation promoted in the Visualisation Sutras, which are themselves pathways to purification and rebirth. The mantras inside the sculpture of Amitābha, written as they are on the face of an opening lotus blossom evocative of rebirth in Sukhāvati, confirm the emphasis on observation and meditation at the Phoenix Hall as routes of access to the Pure Land. According to the Manual of Rituals (71c19–27), they yield the visions of Amitābha in Sukhāvati that generate fields of merit and epiphany. Their physical presence within the sanctuary of the Phoenix Hall, inside the golden icon that is its center of gravity and the point of departure for nenbutu, emphasizes the visionary scheme of the hall. The Phoenix Hall is both a votive image, the object scanned by the eyes and mind during ritual and prayer, and a mnemonic by which that image is sustained. It may well be that, like a sutra or a poem, the Phoenix Hall was meant to be read and remembered, not entered.

How and why the Phoenix Hall was conceived in this manner bears investigation from the discursive ground of its sociohistorical determinants, where the relationship of text to history, so troubling to critical theorists yet so compelling, must be engaged. Much has been written about the Phoenix Hall as a sign invested with the strength and legitimacy of the lineage to which Yorimichi belonged as head of a family of regents to the throne. In this sense a statement about power, the Phoenix Hall emerges as an important monument, elaborate and expensive, of a family of aristocrats with a special claim to authority in the contingent realms of politics and culture. It becomes a symbol of their dominion.

Such an interpretation is convincing if it is assumed that the Phoenix Hall was intended first and foremost as a monument with a public purpose. But it is important to remember that contemporary records, from the personal diaries of courtiers to state-sponsored histories, have little to say about the Phoenix Hall but much in regard to other temples and halls, at Byōdōin and elsewhere. Even records associated directly with Yorimichi and his lineage contain few references to it, citing instead the events staged at the Main Hall or among its residences, as noted. For these reasons another reading is warranted that departs from, but does not necessarily conflict with, the conventional understanding of the Phoenix Hall as a representation of power and legitimacy.

Georges Duby has written that every language "has a word equivalent to 'private,' a zone of immunity to which we may fall back or retreat." For Duby this private realm is a place where we may set aside arms and armor needed in the public place, relax, take our ease, and lie about unshiled by the ostentatious carapace worn for protection in the outside world. This is the place where the family thrives, the realm of domesticity; it is also a realm of secrecy. The private realm contains our most precious possessions, which belong only to ourselves, which concern nobody else.

The ideological effects of its imagery and rich appointments notwithstanding, the Phoenix Hall invites analysis as a manifestation of private life and private concerns as defined by Duby. To the extent that such concerns can be identified, they offer a fruitful interpretative strategy for the exegesis of the Phoenix Hall as a cultural product.

The year that Yorimichi converted his villa at Uji into the
some other of the many calamitous years in the 11th and 12th centuries, was identified in this manner.

89. I am grateful to Professors Neil McMullen and Tim-mi Schreer for their comments on the role of fear in the cultural productions of the kyo-ei elite in the 11th and 12th centuries; see also Yen-yung Hsu, 1994, 448-50.

90. The historian Sakai Misao mentions her brief in relation to Yorimichi; see Sakai (n. 209), 111-12.

91. In his diary Tadamoto describes Kanshi as living at the Byōdōin complex, see Denyakus, 3:108 (Ten-ni 3/1110.1.21), 181 (Ten-ni 3/1111.10.27), 4:132 (Ektu 2/1118.9.19), 5:603 (Ektu 5/1117.12.21). For Kanshi and Shishō at Uji, see ibid., 1:64 (Kōwa 5/1101.8.15), 102 (Kōwa 4/1102.1.24), 199 (Kōwa 5/1105.2.20), 212 (Chōji 1/1104.9.18), 3:220 (Ten-ni 3/1112.4.5), 4:258 (Ektu 4/1116.9.17). In addition to the Lotus Sutra lectures and devotions of 1118, Kanshi sponsored a poetry contest in the vicinity of the hall, various memorials, and the annual celebrations of the Buddhist canon to be discussed presently (Go Nippon Morimichi 1, 1:280, Kanji 3/1089.8.23, Denyakus, 3:234, Ten-ni 3/1112.3.20, 4:242, Ektu 4/1116.5.15, 5:83, Genpichi 1/1118 intercalary 9.22, and Ektu 5/79-81, Genpichi 1/1118 intercalary 9.22).


93. Futsu rakyō, 307 (Ektu 1/1069.5.28).

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the third day of the third month.94 Kanshi was the main sponsor of the Tripitaka Devotions in years to follow, which suggests that she was as instrumental as her father, Yorimichi, in their development and institutionalization at Byōdōin. Indeed, through 1127, when she died at Uji at the age of ninety-two years, Kanshi was the principal figure at the Devotions, the presence of her great-nephew, Tadazane, and other male descendants of Yorimichi notwithstanding.95

Diary accounts indicate that the Tripitaka Devotions were an elaborate affair. Participants arrived at Byōdōin to be escorted in a procession around the Phoenix Hall, viewing it from the path that skirted the eastern and southern shores of the lake, or stopping at the Little Palace for prayers and observation. Musicians and dancers performed along the shore of the lake or on boats and platforms on its surface. The Phoenix Hall was clearly the center of attraction at the Tripitaka Devotions, but the sanctuary was not utilized during services, which instead were held behind the Phoenix Hall at the Kyūzō, or Sutra Repository.96 As a beautiful backdrop to the celebrations and an object of appreciation in its own right, conducive to ruminations on Amitābha and his Pure Land, the Phoenix Hall in this context certainly fulfilled an iconographical program as a votive image. Possibly it is for such reasons that the date of the Tripitaka Devotions coincided with the month in which the Phoenix Hall had been consecrated.

Kanshi, Reishi, and the other influential women of the Fujiwara family also staged at Byōdōin, sometimes within the Phoenix Hall itself, memorials to their husbands and other close male relatives.97 The Lotus Sutra rites sponsored in 1118 by Kanshi were probably intended to memorialize Fujiwara ancestors in general, and most of Yorimichi's descendants were in attendance. That the Phoenix Hall figured in such memorial and penitential rites for Yorimichi and his heirs suggests a strongly private dimension to the function and reception of the chapel at Byōdōin.

There is convincing evidence that neither the Tripitaka Devotions nor the annual memorial services at Byōdōin were events attended by notables outside the main Fujiwara household and its retainers. Unlike nembutsu practices at Hōshōhōji or other temples, where members of the royal family and nobles joined in celebrations of Amitābha, ceremonies at Byōdōin were concerned with the members of Yorimichi's lineage and dominated by its women. By the twelfth century the Tripitaka Devotions were so famous as to be mentioned in virtually all court diaries, but participation was limited to a small audience. In 1141 the empress Taikenmon'in (1101–45) initiated 'Tripitaka Devotions at her own temple complex in Kyoto, Hōkōjōrin, in imitation of those at Byōdōin, perhaps because access to the Uji complex was so difficult.98 The memorials at Byōdōin, like the Tripitaka Devotions, were a family affair largely confined to persons closely affiliated with the Yorimichi line. Tadazane assiduously attended the memorials even as he served as regent, to the irritation of Emperor Shirakawa and others at court.99

Kanshi's husband, Go Reizei, made a trip to Byōdōin in 1067, but other visits by emperors and empresses were rare except in the case of princesses with ties to Kanshi.100 Shirakawa, as emperor and retired emperor, traveled only five times to Uji, and Toba did not pay it a visit until 1132.101 During these years Shirakawa, Toba, and their empresses made frequent excursions to shrines and temples throughout the capital region, often passing Uji en route to their destinations. But they did not stop at Byōdōin, nor were they among the participants at its Tripitaka Devotions, for which the Fujiwaras were wont to turn out in force.102

Shirakawa and Toba belonged to an imperial lineage at odds with that of Go Reizei, and it is possible that Go Reizei's wife, Kanshi, allowed only occasional visits by Shirakawa and Toba to Uji out of loyalty to her husband and his family. Tadazane himself did not have the best of relations with Shirakawa. But it seems equally likely that, because Byōdōin and the Phoenix Hall in particular belonged so thoroughly to the realm of private life, they were not on the agenda for royal excursions. Instead, the Byōdōin complex was the province of domestic Fujiwara business and ceremonies, the place where Tadazane and Shishi took their children to play on the path around the Phoenix Hall, or brought furnishings from home to decorate the site during festivals. Thus, Tadazane greeted with horror the news that a contingent of monks from Kōfukuji in Nara, the pugnacious tutelary temple of his family whose wars with other temples were legendary, was expecting to be put up at Byōdōin in preparation for yet another march on Kyoto and its civilian government in 1116.103

It is true that the Phoenix Hall came to symbolize, and perhaps even to embody, the prestige and legitimacy of Yorimichi's lineage, and as such it was on many levels a statement about mandate in the public sphere. But inquiry

94. Kanshi, in Zōshū Shiryō Taisei Kankō Kai, ed., Zōshū shiryō taisei, XXXIV, Kyoto, 1965, 155a (Rōan 5/1070.3.1). See also Denryaku, 1:78 (Kōwa 3/1101.10.22), for the third day of the third month as the formal date for the Tripitaka Devotions.
95. For Kanshi's prominent role at the Devotions, see Denryaku, 1:299–300 (Chōjū 1/1104.3.3), and Chūkyō, 2:339–340a (Chōjū 1/1104.3.3), 5:58a–b (Gen'e 1/1118.3.5). Her death date, and age at death, are based on Chūkyō, 5:520a (Daji 2/1127.8.14).
96. For descriptions of the Devotions, see Denryaku, 1:299–300 (Chōjū 1/1104.3.3), 2:78 (Ten'e 1/1110.5.26), and Chūkyō, 5:38–39 (Gen'e 1/1118.3.5).
97. For examples of memorial services for Yorimichi and his son Morozane (1042–1101), see Denryaku, 1:48 (Kōwa 3/1101.4.3), 1:102 (Kōwa 4/1101.1.26), 5:7 (Ten'min 2/1102.2.7), and Chūkyō, 2:151b (Kōwa 4.1.26).
98. Hiroshi, 1:15a (Hōen 7/1114.2.28). It should be noted that Taikenmon'in was on poor terms with Tadazane.
99. For example, in 1111 Shirakawa ordered Tadazane to remain at court despite his expressed desire to attend memorial services at Byōdōin (Denryaku, 3:32; Ten'e 2/1111.2.13).
100. Chūkyō, 304 (Iraku 3/1067.10.5); Tsui, 1:63b (Kōji 1/1142.2.5); and Denryaku, 5:38 (Tennin 2/1109.6.24), 4:121 (Ekkyō 2/1114.9.19).
101. Chūkyō, 327 (Onoku 4/1087.5.19), 328 (Kanji 2/1088.10.12); Go Nyūi Moronobu 4:2:175 (Kanji 5/1091.10.12), and Chūkyō, 5:53a (Chibō 1/1131.9.24).
102. Chūkyō, 2:359b (Chōjū 1/1104.3.3). For example, Shirakawa, Toba, and Taikenmon'in on their many outings to the Kusunoki shrine apparently never stopped at Uji or Byōdōin, although they passed within sight of it; see Chūkyō, 5:288a (Daji 2/1127.2.18). It is not true, as is often claimed by scholars influenced by Ivan Morris, The World of the Shogun Prince (1964), Harmondsworth, 1986) that members of the royal family and aristocrats traveled little in the 11th and 12th centuries; diaries and other accounts confirm the opposite to have been the case, with excursions to famous places and local temples commonplace.
into its substrata, for the most part private and hidden, yields a fruitful avenue of exploration. Like the text of which it is a transformation in three dimensions, the Phoenix Hall, once given form within a specific natural and cultural landscape, invites the glosses of private readings. It is at once the site of an act of merit generated by Yorimichi, perhaps to celebrate his sixtieth year, or to ease the entry of a daughter held dear, Kanshi, into the uneasy fabric of palace society; a place of symbolic escape from disease and disorder; and the silent object of pure observation that, like the calling out of Amitābha’s name at twilight, affirms the Buddha’s presence nearby. In this sense the Phoenix Hall is a great deal more than the physical manifestation of a strategy of legitimation. It is a votive image that, poetic and comforting, sustains a private cosmos replicating Sukhāvatī, itself the domicile of Amitābha.

Shōkōmyōin
In the third month of 1136 Toba held the consecration ceremony that marked the completion of Shōkōmyōin, a hall described as utterly beautiful by those in attendance, and one whose realization was more than likely greeted with a sigh of relief by all concerned. Some two years had elapsed since the project was first initiated at the Phoenix Hall early in 1134. Minamoto no Morotoki was the project supervisor and recorded in his diary, Chōshūki, the various difficulties that periodically brought construction to a halt and incensed Toba. Once completed, however, Shōkōmyōin apparently fulfilled its brief as an imitation of the Phoenix Hall and, as noted, was so described in accounts of its consecration.

Around 1130 Toba became interested in the Phoenix Hall on the northern bank of the Kamo River just south of Kyoto proper, and by 1131 he had decided to move the ashes of his father, Shirakawa, to the complex. The area had always been popular with aristocrats, for it was scenic and easily reached from the city, and under Shirakawa an attractive section of wetlands along the river bank was developed into a residential complex with several compounds. When Toba in the fourth month of 1134 initiated discussion of the construction of a replica of the Phoenix Hall at the Phoenix Palace, he had already selected a site north of his main domicile there, just as Yorimichi had chosen for his own hall a spot not far from the Uji residence that was subsequently converted into the Main Hall at Byōdōin. Possibly Toba selected the Phoenix Palace for Shōkōmyōin because it was not far from Uji, which was a short boat trip away.

Toba approached the construction of Shōkōmyōin with obsessive interest. Around him was gathered a contentious group of financiers, advisers, architects, painters, sculptors, and sundry others who met regularly to discuss the project, which at several points was nearly abandoned because of local flooding and even the arrest of the head artisan for murder (Chōshūki, 2:190–91, 196–97, 198, 202, 207–8, 215–16, 284, 295–96). Visits were made to Uji, the Phoenix Hall was studied and sketched, and any alterations to its plan were carefully considered (2:195a, 198a). Both Toba and Morotoki regularly emphasized the need to "copy" the Phoenix Hall even as new features were introduced (2:197a, 216a). Toba was particularly attentive to measurements, ordering that the roof be lowered a few inches, and forcing the head sculptor to recarve sections of the Amitābha statue (2:194a, 197a, 202–3, 276–77, 285a).

The formal statement of consecration provides a thorough description of Shōkōmyōin as it looked in 1136:

Sincerely offered is one hall of tile roof, two stories, and one bay of four sides. Enshrined within is a golden statue of Amitābha that measures one じ and six shaku. A figure of Mahāvairocana is affixed to the mandaorì, along with the Twelve Kōbutsu [Twelve Buddhas of Light] and Twenty-Five Bosatsu [Twenty-Five Bodhisattvas]. The Lesser Amitābha Mantra is written in Sanskrit characters on the surface of the attached mirrors. The canopy contains eight figures of Hiten. On the four pillars are paintings of the deities of the Womb and Diamond mandalas. On the doors on four sides are paintings of the nine degrees of rebirth in Sukhāvatī and scenes of the welcomings. In the aisle on four sides are two-shaku five-sun statues of the bodhisattvas Fugen [Samatabhadra]; Monju [Manjūśrī]; Kokūzō [Akṣāsagarbha]; Miroku [Maitreya]; Jizō [Ksitigarbha]; Kae; and Yuima Koshi [Vimalakirti]; and 223 two-shaku statues of all the Great Bodhisattvas, dragon attendants, and eight classes of guardians. On the wall behind the Amitābha are paintings of the Twenty-Five Bodhisattvas and the nine degrees of rebirth in Sukhāvatī. In the second story are enshrined 7-shaku 5-sun gold statues of the bodhisattvas Kongōhō [Vajradhāra]; Kongōri [Vajratrīksa]; Kongō [Vajrahetu]; and Kongō [Vajrabhāsā]; and 32 four-shaku 5-sun polychrome statues of the Gigakō Bosatsu [Bodhisattvas of Music and Dance].

In Chōshūki (2:190–191, 206b, 276–77) Morotoki confirms

103. Denryakū, 1:299 (Chōjī 1:1104.3.11), 2:12 (Chōjī 1:398.13), 13 (Chōjī 1:9.24), 4:254 (Ekyō 4:1116.5.17), 254 (Ekyō 4:1116.8.15). The wars between Kōfukuji and other temples contributed much to belief in the Final Dharma.

104. For the consecration ceremony, see Chōshūki, 7:179–80 (Hōren 2:1136.3.23); for the consecration address, see Honkei shoku monzo ("Tōba Shōkōmyōin kōzu"), in Kuroki K., ed., Shinzei zō kokubō taisetsu, XXII, Tokyo, 1941, 212-13. In later years the ceremony was described as having been one of the most elaborate ever (Toki, 2:129a, Kyōan 3:1147.8.2).

105. For discussion of Shōkōmyōin, see Sugiyama N., In no guzō to maishō, Nara, 1962, 100; Shimizu, 1992, 311-14; Ōta S., 456; Murayama, 154-58; and Matsuzawa, 35-38. Shōkōmyōin was destroyed by fire in 1242 and the site later used for flooding (Huakuronji [as in n. 37], 199, Sugi 3:1242.7.13).

106. The ashes were installed in a pagoda at the Phoenix Palace in keeping with the wishes of Shirakawa on his deathbed (Chōshūki, 1:300b, Daipō 4:1129.7.16, 2:104a, Tenshō 1:1131.4.12, 121-22, Tenshō 1:7.9). Toba himself would later be interred at the complex, as he had planned as early as 1145 (Toki, 1:167a, Tenvō 2:1145.12.17, and Huakuronji [as in n. 37], 71, Hōgen 1:1156.7.2).

107. For the Phoenix Palace, see Ōta S., 443-74; Sugiyama (as in n. 105), 98-116; and Murayama, 146-76. The Kamo River now flows south of the palace site.

108. Chōshūki, 2:190-91 (Chōshūki 3:1134.4.10). Subsequent citations from Chōshūki are given in the text when they pertain to Shōkōmyōin.

109. Tadae and Shishi often traveled between Uji and the Phoenix Palace by boat along the Kamo and Uji rivers, as did Shirakawa on his visit to Byōdōin in 1091 (Denryakū, 4:259; Ekyō 4:1116.9.23; and Chōshūki, 1:55b, Kanjū 5 (1901, 10.12).

110. For a discussion of the alterations, see Morse, 109.

111. Honkei shoku monzo (as in n. 104), 211.
that Shōkōmyōin had an upper story with four bodhisattvas and numerous other sculptures throughout the building, including mirrors and at least thirty-eight relief figures attached to the mandorla. He also records changes to the flooring of the galleries (2:285a).

Recently Shimizu has argued that Shōkōmyōin resembled the Phoenix Hall only slightly. He cites the second story; structural features such as plank flooring and what he interprets as freestanding turrets (Morotoki's text is by no means clear); and hundreds of sculptures on its interior, along with representations of the Diamond and Womb worlds on the pillars of the sanctuary. The argument is based on the assumption that the interior of the Phoenix Hall today is substantially what it was in 1156, but no such assurance exists. Even Toba, as noted, complained because Tadazane could not produce an original account of the design and construction of the Phoenix Hall (Chōshūki, 2:201a). Aside from the Amitābha statue and the paintings of the nine degrees, what the interior of the Phoenix Hall actually looked like in 1053 is a matter of conjecture. It is by no means impossible that sculptures originally stood in its outer aisles, that many more were mounted on its upper walls or otherwise placed among the rafters, and that paintings of the Diamond and Womb worlds, now lost or repainted, once occupied the pillars in an iconographical configuration consistent with Amitābha as an emanation of Mahāvairocana.

From the exterior the Phoenix Hall appears to have an upper story owing to its skirt roof. A person viewing the building from a boat or the eastern shore of the lake will not necessarily be able to determine whether it is in fact a two-storied building, nor will the composition of its interior be clear. Morotoki records that, preparatory to alterations in the height of Shōkōmyōin, Toba examined it from a boat, that is to say, from a position outside the hall (Chōshūki, 2:197a). Shimizu places too great an emphasis on the internal details and structural composition of Shōkōmyōin, none of which is immediately visible from its exterior. Shōkōmyōin may well have had an upper story, but, when viewed from the outside, so does the Phoenix Hall.

Shimizu also downplays the concern with copying that is evident throughout Morotoki's account of Shōkōmyōin. Toba visited Uji as work began on Shōkōmyōin (Chōshūki, 2:200–201), and Toba and Morotoki sent artisans to the Phoenix Hall and later examined sketches of the complex (2:195a, 198a). Morotoki on occasion even seemed anxious that the format of the Phoenix Hall be followed (2:197a, 216a). Toba’s decision to have the roof of Shōkōmyōin lowered and his reluctance to have an additional bay constructed in each gallery (2:191a) indicate a strong desire to repeat the plan and size of the Phoenix Hall. The effort was successful, for, as noted, Shōkōmyōin on its consecration was described as a copy of the Phoenix Hall. Even Shimizu at one time acknowledged that Shōkōmyōin preserved the identifying features of the Phoenix Hall. What possessed Toba to build a replica of the Phoenix Hall and to persevere in the endeavor despite serious setbacks and advice that he abandon it? Samuel C. Morse has suggested that Toba, enamored of the power that had accrued to the Fujiwara, associated as the lineage was with Byōdōin and the Phoenix Hall, built Shōkōmyōin as a symbolic appropriation of their ancient mandate as the paramount ruling family. There is certainly truth to this claim that Shōkōmyōin, as a mark of legitimation, emulated what might be called the cultural capital of Yorimichi’s famous lineage, and that Toba as an astute statesman saw reason to accumulate such stock in his own right.

There are, however, factors that underlie the telos of Shōkōmyōin as an act of copying that originate in the same order of private life that subverts the Phoenix Hall. Toba relied on the advice of Yorimichi’s great-grandson Tadazane throughout the design and execution of Shōkōmyōin. When Toba visited the Phoenix Hall in 1134, it was Tadazane who escorted him around the complex (Chōshūki, 2:200–201), and it was to Tadazane that Toba turned during disputes among artisans and designers at Shōkōmyōin (2:297b, 277a). Toba had known Tadazane since childhood, when Tadazane had treated Toba with affection despite the apparent dislike he held for Toba’s father, Shirakawa. Toba could not have been happy when a deep rift developed between Shirakawa and Tadazane in 1120, to result in Tadazane’s removal from government and his self-exile to Uji. It is often argued that the dispute began when Tadazane refused to give his only daughter, Taishi (1095–1155), in marriage to Toba, but the situation in reality seems to have been much more complicated. Like Yorimichi on the accession to the throne of Go Sanjō in 1067, Tadazane appears to have withdrawn to Uji with the expectation that he would live out the rest of his life at Byōdōin. In years to come Tadazane would be given the epithet Ujidon, “Lord of Uji,” a title that he shared only with Yorimichi.

Shirakawa dominated palace society even in retirement, and it was not until his death in 1129 that Toba was able to rehabilitate Tadazane, although the Fujiwara leader never again served as regent, the post having passed to his son, Tadamichi (1097–1164). In 1132 Toba made an official visit to Uji, to be escorted around Byōdōin by a delighted Tadazane, who soon resumed his role as a player in court

115. Tadazane was Toba’s senior by twenty-five years. Among his many acts of kindness toward Toba as a child were frequent gifts of toys, as in 1107, when he presented the young prince with a wooden horse and sword (Densyuji, 2:225, Kaji 2:1107.9.16, 228, Kaji 2:1207).
116. Entries in Tadazane’s diary indicate that by 1118 he was already on poor terms with Shirakawa (Densyuji, 5:77, Genji 1/1118.9.5, 79, Genji 1:19.28; 81, Genji 1:19.9). Tsunoda Bun’ei (Takemomoin Fujiwara no Shishi, Tokyo, 1987, 34–39) has argued that Tadazane was disgusted by Shirakawa’s relationship with the young Fujiwara no Shōshi, or Taikenmon’in, and with the latter’s promiscuity, even as Shirakawa married her to his son, Toba. Tadazane’s refusal to allow the entry of his daughter, Taishi, into Toba’s palace probably had much to do with his dislike for both Shirakawa and Taikenmon’in, who had at one time been betrothed to his son, Tadamichi, but had spurned him; also, Tadamichi’s own wife, Shishi, had once been a concubine of Shirakawa and had borne him a child. For a thorough report on court politics in this period, see Hurst, 147–62.
117. For Yorimichi as Ujidon, see Densyuji, 1:43 (Kōwa 5/1101.1.29, 198 (Kōwa 5/1105.2.13); for Tadazane, see Henshū, 1:36a (Kyūzen 5/1149.10.23, 3:40a (Hōgen 3/1158.10.15).
intrigue. Within the year Taishi was betrothed once more to Toba, to enter the palace in the third month of 1134 as the third of Toba’s empresses. A month later work began in earnest on Shōkōmyōin with the ceremonial raising of its ridgepole (Chishiki, 2:191b). The association of Taishi with Shōkōmyōin seems to parallel closely that of Kanshi with the Phoenix Hall, but it has escaped the notice of historians. In 1139 Taishi took the formal title Kayano in, after the Kayano Mansion where she resided from time to time when not at Uji with her parents. It is possible that Toba, fully cognizant of Taishi’s background, built on her behalf, and at the time of her entry into his quarters, an imitation of a beautiful structure that she held dear and that reminded her of the homes in which she had grown to adulthood. Perhaps she planned to hold there Tripātaka Devotions like those she had attended as a child at Byōdōin.

The four large statues that occupied the upper story of Shōkōmyōin are identified in the statement of consecration as representations of important Esoteric bodhisattvas, but Morotoki records that in the original plan they were intended to depict Avalokitesvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Kūtigarba, and Vajrājuna (Chishiki, 2:288a). As such the configuration of bodhisattvas around the figure of Amitābha would have been consistent with the iconography of a Circumambulation Hall, which, as noted, at Tendai temples was the seat of meditations on Amitābha and Sukhāvatī. Two such halls had been built at Hōjōji, one (mentioned earlier) by Minamoto no Rinshi in 1021, the other by Yorimichi’s elder sister, Shōshi, in 1030. Perhaps Taishi, as the most prominent woman of the Fujiwara lineage of her day, thought to follow in the footsteps of her illustrious ancestors by encouraging Toba to build at Shōkōmyōin, not just a replica of the Phoenix Hall, but a structure that, in the discreet privacy of its interior, could be used as a Circumambulation Hall for retreats and meditation.

It may well be an accident of history, but it is nonetheless striking that, as in the case of the Phoenix Hall, Shōkōmyōin was constructed at a time of sickness and social instability. Diarists describe the years 1134 and 1135 as unparalleled in their horrors, from civil disorder to famine, epidemic “in the extreme,” and a city that had grown crowded with the dead and dying. Two months before the consecration of Shōkōmyōin, in 1136, Fujiwara no Munetada (1062–1141) wrote in his diary, Chiyuki, of the babies he saw abandoned throughout Kyoto, and several weeks before the event he noted once more the corpses, fountains, and beggars that lined its streets. Munetada is prone to speak at such times of signs of the extinction of the Dharmā.

Under these circumstances it is reasonable to suppose that Shōkōmyōin was for Toba and his new wife, in the moment it replicated the Phoenix Hall, a place not necessarily dictated by strategies of legitimation. Like the Phoenix Hall it can be compared to a votive image framed by the private needs of the men and women who from time to time used it as a focus of meditation and sought a modicum of peace within its precincts as their society grew more troubled. A memorial aspect, also reminiscent of the Phoenix Hall, may well have been incorporated into the reception of Shōkōmyōin, for the pagoda in which Shirakawa was interred, and where the ashes of Toba would be deposited in 1156, stood just east of the hall.

A special resonance links the Phoenix Hall and Shōkōmyōin, its source the often concealed ground of women’s praxis. Both buildings were three-dimensional realizations of a sutra about a woman, Lady Vaiḍhehi, and her quest for insight and rebirth beyond the realm of suffering. There is every reason to believe that a vestige of the world of Kanshi and Taishi, while only of peripheral concern to most modern commentators, is to be found at the Phoenix Hall and Shōkōmyōin, where the universe of private life intersected with the public sphere, as would also hold true of Muruyōkōin.

Muryōkōin

The sponsor of Muruyōkōin was neither an aristocrat nor an emperor; in fact, he was regarded as a barbarian. Despite his surname Fujiwara no Hidehira was a product of the hinterland, having come to power at Hiraizumi as the third in a dynasty of warlords who from the late eleventh century had held sway over much of northern Japan from their base at the confluence of the Koromo and Kitakami rivers. Hidehira was to be the last of the Hiraizumi Fujiwara, as this military house is known to history, and his temple, Muryōkōin, was the final project in a century of avid sponsorship of regional Buddhism and Buddhist culture by his family. When Hidehira succeeded as head of the domain on the death around 1157 of his father, Motohira, three luxurious temples already existed in Hiraizumi. One was Chūsonji, built by his grandfather Kiyohira (d. 1128) on the summit of the low mountain that marks the northwestern edge of Hiraizumi; the others were Mōtsūji, sponsored by Motohira and completed by Hidehira, and Kanjizaiōin, sponsored by Motohira’s wife, both on the main road leading into the city from the south. Hidehira initiated work on Muruyōkōin sometime between 1157 and 1187, when he succumbed to illness and old age as Hiraizumi faced attack by the warlord Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), new ruler of Japan, and a man determined to wrest control of the north from the Hiraizumi Fujiwara. Scholars assign to Muruyōkōin a tentative date of

119. Chishō, 2:155a (Chishō 2/1135.6.2), and Chiyuki, 7:89b (Chishō 3/1134.5.19).
120. For Taishi at Uji and Kayano Mansion, see Chiyuki, 6:228b (Daigai 5/1130.9.25), and Denryaku, 1:65 (Kôwa 4/1102.10.15), 300 (Chôjô 1/1104.3.3).
121. See, e.g., Denryaku, 1:300 (Chôjô 1/1104.3.3). Interestingly, there seems to be no record of Tripātaka Devotions at Byōdōin in 1136.
122. Chiyuki, 5:56b (Chishō 2/1133.7.21), 122a (Chishō 3/1134.4.30), 154b (Hôen 1/1135.6.21), 163b (Hôen 1/1136.1.24), 174a (Hôen 2/1136.1.26), 179a (Hôen 2.5.1), and Chishō, 2:270a (Hôen 1.4.22), 377b (Hôen 1.5.1).
123. In fact, Toba and Morotoki discussed the pagoda in their plans for Shōkōmyōin (Chishōb, 2/207a, Chishō 3/1134.6.19).
124. Kôji Kanezane, a grandson of Tadazane, described Hiraizumi as “that savage from the northern provinces” (Kokusho Kanikôkai, ed., Goyoku, 3 vols., Tokyo, 1906–7, ii, 102, Kôji 2/1170.5.27).

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1170, when Hidehira was appointed to high office. The single contemporary description of the hall, in a petition to Yoritomo contained in the Kamakura history *Azuma kagami*, is so succinct as to suggest that it was still under construction as late as 1189, when the document was compiled by Hiraizumi monks seeking shogunal protection for their temples. However, it is also possible that the authors of *Azuma kagami* were reticent about Muryōkōin because, unlike the other Hiraizumi temples, it was part of a private residence belonging to Hidehira.

Muryōkōin no longer exists; like Shōkōmyōin it was lost to the river near whose banks it was built. Its appearance is known through the description in *Azuma kagami* and on the basis of modern study of the site (Fig. 18). The account in *Azuma kagami* is indeed brief.

Muryōkōin, the New Hall, was built by Hidehira. On its walls and doors on four sides are paintings of the main teachings of the *Visualization Sutra*; Hidehira himself has painted the scenes of hunting. The Main icon is a one-jō six-shaku sculpture of Amitābha. There is a three-story pagoda. The precinct is beautiful. It is a place copied in full after Uji’s Byōdōin.

Excavation of the site in 1952 confirmed that the plan of Muryōkōin followed for the most part that of the Phoenix Hall. Facing east, it stood on an island situated at a point oriented toward the western shore of a lake created in the shape of a Sanskrit syllable, and it consisted of a center chapel, measuring three narrow bays across and two bays deep, flanked to north and south by L-shaped corridors extending toward the lake. Just south of Muryōkōin was what the authors of *Azuma kagami* identify as Hidehira’s "daily residence," Kara Mansion.

As in the case of Shōkōmyōin, a number of Muryōkōin’s features indicate that it departed somewhat from the Phoenix Hall. That Hidehira painted scenes of hunting on the walls of Muryōkōin is puzzling, although not inconsistent...
with the last meditation in the *Visualisation Sutra* (346a13), where killers are described as eligible for rebirth in Sukhāvatī through faith in Amitābha. Such scenes are found neither at the Phoenix Hall nor in depictions of the nine degrees of rebirth in other Amitābha Halls, and they may derive from an idiosyncratic interpretation of the sutra by Hidehira to accommodate both personal belief and a northern heritage that celebrated hunting as indicative of military prowess.130

Muryōkōin differs slightly from the Phoenix Hall in plan as well as in the subject matter of its paintings. Study of the foundations has shown that Muryōkōin contained an extra bay in each gallery, making it approximately 36 feet (11 m) larger than the Phoenix Hall from north to south.131 No evidence exists of a "tail" corridor (but this may well be due to flood damage). There was another island in the lake directly east of the center chapel. On this stood three structures, closely aligned along an east–west axis governed by the chapel.

It is unclear why Hidehira chose to build a replica of the Phoenix Hall near his main domicile in Hiraizumi. The argument can be made that he was impressed by the cultural productions of the powerful Fujiwara lineage associated with the Phoenix Hall, that of Yorimichi, and sought to match them by appropriating one of the most famous of Fujiwara monuments as a sign of his own power. Both Kiyohira and Motohira had administered landholdings in northern Japan for Tadazane and Yorinaga, direct descendants of Yorimichi, and Motohira had ties to Tadamichi, whose calligraphy graced the ceremonial placard that hung at the entrance to Mōtsuji.132 Without doubt Hidehira knew not only of the Phoenix Hall but also of the significance it held for the family that had lived and worshiped within its precincts for more than a century. To assume, however, that such significance was primarily political or ideological,133 and that Muryōkōin was the core construct in a symbology of rule, establishes an unnecessarily limited framework for its analysis.

Kanno Seikan has proposed that the island at the center of the lake at Muryōkōin was intended to serve as a site for meditation. It stood across the water from Muryōkōin just as the Little Palace at Byōdōin faced the Phoenix Hall from the eastern shore of its lake. In each case the worship hall, as an embodiment of the *Visualisation Sutra*, set before its beholders a vision of Sukhāvatī, which, in keeping with the teachings of that sutra, ideally guided practitioners into a state of deepening concentration symbolized by the hands of the Amitābha.134 As such, Muryōkōin lends itself to analysis as a place and a building not necessarily governed by dictates of power.

Quite possibly, even, it existed as a zone of refuge from the anxieties of power. As Hidehira was forced by a weakening central government into a position hostile to Yoritomo, war became a certainty. Like the Phoenix Hall and Shōkōmyōin for their own sponsors in times of perceived instability, Muryōkōin provided for Hidehira a votive image of "another world" where conflict and violence did not exist. A person engaged in meditation on the island in the lake might well have awoken from trance to an illusion of having been reborn on the waters in front of Amitābha’s palace in Sukhāvatī, a domain far removed from the "teeming hells" of the everyday world.

In this context Kanno has argued convincingly that, like the Phoenix Hall, Muryōkōin was designed with the sky at twilight in mind. He has calculated that the peak moment of observation, when the sun sank behind the hall to silhouette it against the evening sky, occurred in Hidehira’s day in the lunar month when ceremonies were held in memory of Kiyohira and Motohira. As such, he maintains, Muryōkōin was conceived as both the memorial temple of the Hiraizumi Fujiwara and a representation of the Pure Land into which, by prayer and merit, they would be delivered.135

Who would tend the memorials once Hidehira was gone? Not surprisingly the Phoenix Hall provides a precedent in its primary resident, Empress Kanshi, as does Shōkōmyōin in the person of Taishi. Hidehira took a Fujiwara woman from Kyoto as his wife. She arrived in Hiraizumi early in the 1150s with her father, Fujiwara no Motonari (ca. 1120–7), who, after nearly a decade as a local governor, opted not to return to Kyoto. As Tsunoda Bun’ei has shown, Motonari belonged to a highly political Fujiwara line collateral to that of Yorimichi, and his half-brother, Nobuyori (1133–1159), was on intimate terms with Emperor Toba. Despite pedigree, status, and very close ties to the imperial house through female relatives who served as wet nurses to royal offspring, Motonari elected to live out his life in Hiraizumi, first as a confidant of Motohira, and later as adviser to Hidehira. Motonari’s decision to remain in Hiraizumi is usually attributed to Nobuyori’s arrest and execution for a failed coup d’État on the death of Toba in 1156.136

Nothing is known about Hidehira’s wife, nor is she considered to be one of the reasons her father never returned to Kyoto. Nonetheless, her influence seems to have been considerable. Coincident with her presence in Hiraizumi is the appearance at its temples of imagery associated with the Phoenix Hall. Kanjizaiōin, sponsored by Motohira’s wife around the time of his death in 1157, bore on the walls of its sanctuary paintings of sacred sites around the capital, among them the Phoenix Hall.137 Since Motohira’s wife was a local woman,138 it is likely that she learned in detail about such

134. Kanno, 173, 178–84. Araki (185–86) argues that the island was used for music and dance.
137. The sites were those of the Hachiman Gohōjô, or Festival of Releasing Birds and Animals at the Hachiman Shrine; Kamo no Matsuri, or Festival of the Kamo Shrine; Karama; Daigo Sakezue, or Cherry-Blossom Viewing at Daigo; Uji Byōdōin; Saga; and Kaiminzudera. See Ōkaji *sho* *zui* *shun*, in Hiraizumi Chôshiki Hensan Iin Kai, ed., *Hiraizumi chôshiki*, Shinkyô, t. Tokyô, 1983, 90a.
places, and the Phoenix Hall in particular, from someone who had actually seen them, perhaps a Fujiwara daughter-in-law.

Hidehira's wife, possibly with her father as adviser, may also have had a role in the design and planning of Muryōkō-in. Her paternal grandfather, Tadataka, had been one of the primary financiers of Shōkōmyō-in.139 Recently Kanamaru Yoshikazu has suggested that Muryōkō-in was modeled, not directly on the Phoenix Hall but on its imitation at Shōkōmyō-in, and indeed the similarities are striking, from construction of the halls directly north of the main domicile of the sponsor to structural changes in the galleries.140 Perhaps most compelling, Hidehira's wife at Muryōkō-in echoes the other women of the Phoenix Hall paradigm. Like Kanshi and Taishi, she was given in marriage to a powerful man, and in her wake, perhaps even as a form of dowry professed by a doting father, there came a splendid realization in architecture of the Visualization Sutra. For a woman brought from the polish of Kyoto to settle in a territory not unlike the American Wild West, where her husband and sons in years to come would engage in battles that would destroy them, what better place for solace, than a three-dimensional representation of Sukhavatī that replicated, in form and in function, the temples she had known in childhood as part of the heritage of her family?

In its genealogy Muryōkō-in must be understood as constituted in large part by an order of experience situated behind the scenes of power struggle that hold the attention of most historians. This is Doby's "realm of domesticity," where Muryōkō-in, like the Phoenix Hall and Shōkōmyō-in, is the precious possession of its sponsors in the idiosyncratic privacy of their home and desires, a domain of memorials to ancestors, personal meditation on a compassionate Buddha in a time of need, individualized expressions of faith or possibly penitence (the hunting scenes), and, perhaps, remembrance.

Recompilations

The Phoenix Hall through its recompilations is a monument both curious and compelling. It is at once a building and a scripture, its point of departure a visionary text whose goal is realization, and reification, of a mental image of the transcendent realm of Amitābha in Sukhavatī. As such the Phoenix Hall takes form before its beholders as an object of longing, the desire for which can only be fulfilled through the double release of enlightenment and the death of a subject. Consequently, it yields several "thicknesses of art," to borrow from Marcel Proust,141 that enrich its reception and interpretation as a cultural monument.

That the Phoenix Hall is a votive image, intended for observation from afar, seems evident on the basis of miniaturized aspects such as the low upper stories of the galleries and turrets, and the illusion of two stories for a center chapel in fact having only one. It can be likened to a theme park with Sukhavatī the object of depiction and pleasurable examination from a path that must be ever external to it. Possibly this is the reason why the Phoenix Hall was imitated while other temples and halls were not. For, as a "miniature Sukhavatī" in a parklike setting, it became copyable, a "surface" readily transcribed elsewhere, with later replications charged with nostalgia for the primary monument.142 Replication, in all of its overdetermination, seems to be in large part a strategy of preservation. The acts of copying associated with the Phoenix Hall were also acts of coping. Whether in the replication of the paradise set forth by a beloved sutra or of paradisial buildings invested with its imagery, copying brings to mind what Michael Taussig in another context has called "the magical power of replication."143 Redundancy, in ritual as in cybernetics or a military aircraft, localizes and stabilizes its charge, be it information or the unseen forces of the divine. Just as in times of epidemic and disaster, as intimations of the Final Dharma grew manifold, sutras were transcribed by the thousands at the imperial palace or in the homes of courtiers,144 so it might be argued that copies of the Phoenix Hall, as a transformation of the Visualization Sutra and an image of Sukhavatī, offered to their sponsors a moment of respite, even comfort, through the very redundancy of the act of transcription.

In redundancy lies the ground of mimesis, which yields an unexpectedly rich exegesis of the Phoenix Hall through its transcriptions. René Girard in Violence and the Sacred provides the unlikely conceptual model that, applied to Shōkōmyō-in and Muryōkō-in, leads to an enhanced analysis of the phenomenon of copying associated with the Phoenix Hall. Girard isolates desire, conflict, and mimesis as the primary drives by whose triangulated dynamic the ecstatic condition of many religions is formed. He speaks of a godlike Dionysus as an object of longing that is a "chimera," ever elusive, and desire for him as simply the desire for what another man has. Thus Dionysus, as in The Bacchae of Euripides, disappears "as the men who sought to bend him to their uses turn on one another with murderous intent." 145 Violence at Shōkōmyō-in and Muryōkō-in seems a complete absurdity until Girard's mimetic triad is introduced. The peacefulness of the Pure Land imagery hides a negative ground of conflict and competition.146 Both monuments were built by men in imitation of other men with whom, or more accurately with whose political interests and public transcripts of mandate, they were at odds. Toba may have enjoyed cordial relations with Tadazane, but ultimately the two men stood in opposition, with Toba maneuvering to

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139. Chiyuki, 7:180b (Hōzen 2/1136.3.23).
142. I am grateful to Jennifer G. Purtle for the idea of the theme park.
144. See, e.g., Chiyuki, 3:31–33 (Chōji 2/1105.3.30).

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dominate and even remove from power those affiliated with the Fujiwara lineage of Yorimichi. As a regional warlord Hidehira, whether it was in emulation of Tadazane or Toba that he built Muryōkōin, knew them also as threats to the integrity of his domain. 147

The replication of the Phoenix Hall by men who were ultimately rivals of its founding family, yet who married women of that family, seems an act both desperate and perfectly reasonable. It is not one whose primary impetus is to be found in the public spectacle of legitimation. Rather, the act of mimesis here belongs to the private (and sometimes nightmarish) realm, a kind of morning after, of longing for a wish-image that, meant to satisfy desire and for a moment countenanced in the thrill of a monument built and relished, instead slips away as it is appropriated, just as the realm of Amitābha recedes ineluctably before those who would have it.

The drama of desirous males does not, however, encompass all of the phenomena of replication surrounding the Phoenix Hall. In the opening passages of the Nihonshūzoku Tittō (541a–b) a royal woman, troubled by the rivalries and politicking of her husband and son, calls out to the Buddha for release from her sufferings, and in response he grants her a vision of Sukhāvatī and the assurance of rebirth there. In this sense the Phoenix Hall and its copies perhaps represented, for Kanshi, Taishi, and Hidehira's now nameless wife, a parallel universe that, like Sukhāvatī, offered escape from the travails of daily life. In that universe of women's praxis were held the rites by which whole families were sustained, from penitential readings of the Lotus Sutra and memorials to the dead to annual festivities celebrating the Buddhist canon. At the Phoenix Hall, at Shōkōmyōin, and at Muryōkōin, the women of the Fujiwara entered the domain sought by Lady Vaidhei, where the golden form of Amitābha rose above the purifying waters of a lake. Here Sukhāvatī took form as a "generalized religious goal" in the sense proposed by Gregory Schopen, as not only a place or a pure land, but also a state of mind. 148

When the lake at the Phoenix Hall is still and the light from the sun clear, the building and the face of the sculpture, framed in the oval of its window, are reflected on the surface of the water. It is a scene that evokes the power of reflection in Buddhist practice, with the heart and mind mirrored in the object of contemplation. It also recalls the many descriptions in A Tale of Flowering Fortunes of the mirrorlike surfaces, from the lake to polished wood floors, on which the halls and fixtures of Hōjōji are seen in "beautiful reflections." The ideograph used for such reflections, sha, or "copy," is the same as that by which Shōkōmyōin and Muryōkōin are identified as imitations of the Phoenix Hall. 149

Are Shōkōmyōin and Muryōkōin "mirroring" of the Phoenix Hall? Is the Phoenix Hall itself a reflection of Sukhāvatī brought to bear upon the world of desire? Such questions, with their implications of artifice and inversion, recall Theodor Adorno's observation that the "oldest means of enlightenment" is the ruse. 150 Perhaps this is why the Buddha smiles as he begins to explain for Lady Vaidhei the sixteen visualizations by which she will see the Pure Land like her own face in a mirror.

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