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## **Dreams, Myths and Fairy Tales in Japan**

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## Introduction

This book consists of five lectures which were originally given at Eranos Conferences, Ascona, Switzerland, from 1983 to 1988. All are concerned with Japanese culture: Japanese dreams, myths, fairy tales, and medieval stories.

In my youth, I was strongly attracted to Western culture. With my experiences of the Second World War, I came to hate the irrational and constantly vague Japanese attitude toward life. Scientific rational thinking stood as the symbol of the West and always as a creative treasure for me to capture.

In 1959, I came to the United States to study clinical psychology in order to become like a Westerner. The experience in fact opened the way to Jung's psychology, by which I was able to find myself as a Japanese. After my initial years of study in the United States, I went to the C.G. Jung Institute in Zürich, Switzerland, receiving a diploma there in 1965. Interestingly, Western analysts helped me find the values of Japanese culture. Before that, I was of the opinion that the Japanese must make efforts to establish a modern ego, following the European way completely. Then all of the unique features of Japanese tradition seemed for me to be utterly disgusting and unbearable. The old ways of living had to be discarded as soon as possible. However, I began to realize, through my analytical experiences, that European consciousness is not "the best" nor "the only one" for everybody in the world to attain. Jung talked about the importance of Self to which the conscious ego must surrender. If Self is most precious there might be other ways to reach it, other than following the European way with its ego-Self axis.

If Self-realization is understood as a process and not a goal, we can compare the process for Japanese and Westerners, and benefit each other without concern for

which is better or worse. Although I still retain my opinion that the Japanese must learn from the modern European way of ego establishment, they do not have to imitate it completely. The Japanese must struggle to find their own way. For my part, I began to investigate Japanese mythology, fairy tales, and old stories because they contain so much knowledge of the unconscious. They were first told by a consciousness which is different from the modern ego. Their features give us hints about the new conscious states of we modern Japanese. Westerners might be interested in these new states, if they too are trying to find a way to go beyond their own modern ego.

In the first chapter, some medieval stories are discussed, especially those having to do with dreams. At that time, the demarcation lines between conscious and unconscious and between human beings and Nature are very thin. With that kind of consciousness, one can certainly have a different view of the world from that of modern people. Medieval persons can acknowledge inner reality much more freely and easily.

The second chapter is about a Japanese priest in the 12th-13th Centuries called "Myôe," who keeps a dream diary until the end of his life. With interpretations of some of his dreams, I try to show how his state of consciousness is different from that of modern people. As a result of his dream experiences he claims to attain the state of "coagulation of body and mind." It is a hint for thinking about the difficult issue of the body and mind continuum. It is indeed a different approach from Descartes.

The third chapter deals with Japanese mythology. There I pay attention to gods who are neglected in the Japanese pantheon. The mightiest God is the center in Christianity; a god who does nothing stands in the center of the Japanese pantheon. This remarkable difference is reflected in their psychology and ways of living.

In the fourth chapter, I discuss Japanese fairy tales in connection with the theme of beauty. Japanese fairy tales have a completely different structure from Grimm's tales. We seldom find a Japanese fairy tale in which a male hero attains the goal of marrying a beautiful woman after accomplishing the difficult tasks assigned to him. In this chapter, I try to make it clear that the main thrust of Japanese fairy tales is aesthetic rather than ethical. Japanese fairy tales convey to us what is beautiful instead of what is good.



In the last chapter, I discuss the long medieval story called “Torikaebaya.” A boy is raised as a girl, and a girl, his sister, is raised as a boy. The girl herself pretends to be a boy, even eventually marrying a woman. With the exchange of sexual roles, the story implies that the clearcut division between manliness and womanliness is artificial. Human beings have rich possibilities – one can be manly and womanly at the same time. The story gives us suggestions to enrich our ways of life.

In these chapters I compare some characteristics of Japanese culture with those of the West. I am afraid readers may feel I put too much value on the Asian side. In fact I think both are equally important. Until recently I had thought in terms of integrating the two, or of finding a third way somewhere between them. But nowadays I think it is impossible. I now feel that we can be conscious of the state of being we are in and of the advantage and disadvantage of it in detail. It might be better if we could switch from one attitude to another according to the situation.

I shall be happy if this book in some way helps readers in the West see their own way of life from a different angle.



*Figure 1. Jizô Bodisatva rescuing a person in Hell*

## I. Interpenetration: Dreams in Medieval Japan

### 1. *Dreams*

A dream is a peculiar product. When I have a dream, I refer to it as my dream, but to whom does the dream really belong? I call a painting mine insofar as it is my creation with which I am free to do as I wish – I can keep it or destroy it. We do not make our dreams and yet we call them our own. To speak of a dream as being “mine” is somewhat like saying, “This is my Picasso.” Although Picasso did the painting, I claim it as mine and can do with it as I please. However, there is a problem with this analogy. Where is the “Picasso” who painted my dream? Furthermore, I cannot control a dream as freely as a painting. Sometimes I even feel that a dream destroys me.

Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that a dream is like a butterfly which happens to fly into my garden. I can see and appreciate it, but the butterfly comes and goes of its own accord. I can catch it and literally pin it down to analyze, but it would have undergone an important change, for then it would already be dead. Some of you may be familiar with the story of Chuang Tzu (ca. 330 B.C.) and the butterfly. Chuang Tzu once dreamt that he had become a butterfly. Upon awakening he wondered whether it was a human being who had just dreamt of being a butterfly, or a butterfly which had dreamt that it had become a human being. Chuang Tzu raises a big question: Can it be that my whole life is someone else’s dream?

Most people today assume that their dreams belong to them, but do not feel responsible for what they dream. This contradictory attitude reveals a flaw in the prevalent understanding of dreams. I think it may be more accurate to say that they belong to the cosmos as well as to the human being who sees them.

In this respect people in pre-modern societies had a more suitable attitude towards their dreams. Before I explain what I mean by this, I would like to tell a story about dream experiences in medieval Japan. The following episode appears in the *Uji Shui Monogatari (USM)*, a collection of stories compiled at the beginning of the thirteenth century:

There was a man living with his wife and only daughter. He loved his daughter very much and made several attempts to arrange a good marriage for her, but was unable to succeed. Hoping for better fortune he built a temple in his backyard, enshrined it with the bodhisattva of compassion, Kannon, and asked the deity to help his daughter. He died one day, followed by his wife shortly thereafter, and the daughter was left to herself. Though her parents had been wealthy she gradually became poor and eventually even the servants left.

Utterly alone, she had a dream one night in which an old priest emerged from the temple of Kannon in the backyard and said to her, "Because I love you so much, I would like to arrange a marriage for you. A man I have called will visit here tomorrow. You should do whatever he asks." The next night a man with about thirty retainers came to her home. He seemed quite kind and proposed to marry her. He was attracted to her because she reminded him of his deceased wife. Remembering the words which Kannon had spoken to her in her dream, she accepted his proposal. The man was very pleased and told her that he would be back the next day after attending to some business.

More than twenty of his retainers remained behind to spend the night at her home. She wanted to be a good hostess and prepare a meal for them, but she was too poor to do so. Just then an unknown woman appeared who identified herself as the daughter of a servant who used to work for the parents of the hostess a long time ago. Sympathetic to the hostess' plight, she told the latter that she would bring food from her home to feed the guests. When the man returned the next day, she helped the daughter of her parents' master again by serving the man and his attendants. The hostess showed her gratitude by giving her helper a red ceremonial skirt (Jpn. *hakama*).

When the time came to depart with her fiancé, she went to the temple of Kannon to express her thanks. To her surprise she found the red skirt on the shoulder of the statue; she realized then that the woman who had come to help her was actually a manifestation of Kannon.<sup>1</sup>

In this story we see the free interpenetration of this world and the dream world, a common feature of medieval Japanese stories concerning dreams. What Kannon fore-

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<sup>1</sup> *Uji Shui Monogatari*, revision and commentary by Etsuji Nakajima, Kadokawa Shoten, Tokyo, 1960, Ch. 9, No. 3 (108). I am giving somewhat shortened summaries of the original versions here. There is an English translation of the *USM: A Collection of Tales from Uji: A Study and Translation of the Uji Shui Monogatari*, trans. by D.E. Mills, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970. The corresponding episode number is in the parentheses.

tells in the dream is realized in the waking world, and the bodhisattva manifests himself in the form of an actual human being.

Before continuing I would like to say a little more about the sources which I am using. These are the *Uji Shui Monogatari*, which I mentioned earlier, and the *Myôe Shonin Yume no Ki*, or *The Dream Diary of Saint Myôe*.

During the Kamakura and Muromachi Periods in Japan several major collections of religious stories were compiled. The *USM* is one of these and contains anecdotes, legends, and records of historical events from India, China, and Japan which Buddhist priests used in their sermons. All strata of society are represented in these tales. Unknown members of the lower classes as well as famous warriors and nobles appear in them. It is difficult to say how and when they evolved; some have been transmitted down to this day in the form of fairy tales and are still being modified. Although they are primarily didactic Buddhist episodes, they are interesting from the standpoint of depth psychology due to the inclusion of dreams and fantasies. Many of them appear in variations or in virtually the same version in several different collections. I have chosen the *USM* because it contains many outstanding examples of the interpenetration of the dream and waking worlds. The period of its compilation overlaps with the life of Myôe (1173–1232) whose dreams I will also discuss.

## 2. *Life and Death*

The land of death is easily entered in the dreams of medieval Japan. The following is a typical example:

There was a Buddhist priest named Chiin Kano who failed to keep the precepts and was only interested in worldly affairs. On the side of the road leading up to his temple there was a tower enshrined with an old neglected statue of the bodhisattva Jizo. Occasionally the priest would remove his hood and bow to the statue as he passed by.

After he died, his master said, "That priest was always breaking the precepts. He was so bad he's surely gone to hell," but the master still felt sorry for him.

Shortly thereafter, some people from the temple noticed that the statue of Jizo had disappeared from the tower and thought that the statue might have been taken out for repair.

One night the master had a dream: A priest appeared and said, “Jizo has gone to hell with priest Chiin Kano in order to help him.” The master then asked why Bodhisattva Jizo had gone to accompany such a bad priest. The priest in the dream replied, “Because Chiin Kano bowed to Jizo sometimes when he passed by the tower.” Upon awakening, the master went to the tower to check for himself and saw that the statue of Jizo was actually gone.

After a while he had another dream in which he went to the tower and found Jizo standing there. He asked why Jizo had reappeared, and a voice said, “Jizo has returned from hell, where he had gone to help Chiin Kano. The fire has burned his feet.” Upon awakening, the master hurried to the tower and saw that Jizo’s feet had actually been charred. He was deeply moved, and tears flowed down his face.

After hearing this story, many went to worship the statue of Jizo in the tower.<sup>2</sup>

Jizo went to hell and returned to this world with actual evidence of his journey. The circumstances surrounding his disappearance were all related in dreams. The *USM* contains numerous stories in which not only bodhisattvas but ordinary humans also go to and return from the land of death, and a large number of these involve dreams. Whether such stories are “real” is not our concern. What is important is that through them we can learn about the kind of cosmos the people of that period lived in.

What we have seen so far is that their cosmology included the land of death, or life after death. In order to really think about our lives I feel that it is important to take a standpoint which encompasses both this world and the next.

Here is another story about a man who goes to the land of death:

There was a talented calligrapher named Toshiyuki, and some two hundred people asked him to copy the Lotus Sutra, an important Buddhist scripture. (It was customary during that time to have scriptures copied as a means of accruing merit towards an auspicious afterlife.)

One day Toshiyuki became mortally ill, and just as he thought, “I’m going to die,” he was caught by an unknown man who took him to the land of death. There Toshiyuki saw two hundred horrible-looking people, all wearing armor and breathing fire from their mouths. Terrified, he asked his captor who these people were. The man told him that they were the ones who had asked

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<sup>2</sup> *USM*, Ch. 5, No. 13 (82).



Toshiyuki to copy the Lotus Sutra. They were now suffering unexpectedly because he had made the copies with defiled hands: he had failed to purify them after having relations with women or eating fish. Toshiyuki had not actually been fated to die, but was brought to the land of death to suffer revenge. His captor told him that his body would be cut into two hundred pieces, and his mind divided among them to experience the pain. They came to a river flowing with a thick, black liquid, and he was told that it was the ink which he had used to copy the sutra. The copies he had made had to be washed away because they were impure.

When he went before the court of the land of death, he vowed to copy the Suvârṇa-prabhâsa Sutra, a lengthy four-volume scripture, and he was allowed to return to this world. He made this vow because the man had told him that this was the only way to be rescued. Upon returning he felt that what he had just experienced “was like looking into a clear, bright mirror,” and he was firmly resolved to copy the sutra. But when he became well again, he forgot about everything and spent his time pursuing women instead.

He died a few years later, and an acquaintance named Tomonori Kino had a dream about him: Toshiyuki looked so terrible that he was hardly recognizable. He told Tomonori, “I came back to life with the help of my vow to copy sutras, but now I am suffering unbearably because I did not fulfill the vow. If you have any sympathy, please find the paper I had set aside for copying, take it to the monk at the temple of Miidera, and ask him to do what I had promised.” The dream ended with Toshiyuki crying bitterly. As soon as he awoke he went to get the paper and took it to the monk at Miidera. The monk was glad to see him and said that Toshiyuki had appeared in a dream asking him to copy the sutra on the paper that Tomonori Kino brought.

The monk made the copies and held a service for Toshiyuki. He reappeared in the dreams of both Tomonori Kino and the monk of Miidera, and he looked much better.<sup>3</sup>

Although what he saw in the land of death did not help him change his earthly life, his experiences there clearly mirrored his life in this world. The remarkable synchronicity of events in dreams, this world, and the land of death was not considered unusual.

### 3. *Which is the Real Reality?*

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<sup>3</sup> *USM*, ch. 8, no. 4 (102).

As I was reading the stories in the *USM*, I began to feel the people of that time believed that reality had many layers, and that its appearance differed greatly according to the layer being seen. The next story illustrates this view of multiple realities:

There was a man who fell in love with the daughter of the priest of Daianji Temple in Nara. He was so attached to her that he would even sleep with her during the day. Once when he dozed off he saw the following dream: The people in the house suddenly started to cry, and he looked at them in surprise. The priest and his wife [i.e., the parents of the man's lover], the servants, and everyone else were drinking molten copper from a large earthenware vessel. One of the servants called to the daughter who had been sleeping beside the man. She cried as she drank the scalding liquid from a silver bowl, and smoke came out of her eyes and nose. The servant then offered the bowl to the dreamer. He became frantic and awoke from the dream.

When he returned to the waking world, he was startled to find a servant bringing him food. He heard the sound of the family eating and thought, "They are recklessly consuming what belongs to the temple. That is what I saw [in the dream]." He was so disgusted that his feelings of affection for the daughter vanished without a trace. He declined the food, left the house, and never returned.<sup>4</sup>

In his dream the man sees a layer of reality different from that of external appearances. Without the view which the dream affords him, the family would seem to be simply enjoying a meal together. Because he feels the scene in which he saw them being tormented is closer to the truth, he decides to end his relationship with his lover and her family. Yet, on an entirely different level, one might say that without any good reason he lost his chance to establish himself in the rich priest's family.

It is an uncanny world in which an entire family drinks molten copper, but what the man sees is more representative of the truth, or in Jung's terms, of psychic reality.

The following story is even more uncanny and involves life after death. It is concerned with the father-son relationship and makes for an interesting comparison with the myth of Oedipus:

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<sup>4</sup> *USM*, Ch. 9, No. 7 (112).

There was a Buddhist priest named Jokaku who lived near the temple of Kamitsuizumoji in northern Kyoto. He had succeeded to the temple following the death of his father, but it was now in a state of disrepair.

One day he had the following dream: His father appeared, looking very old and carrying a long stick in his hand. He said, "At two in the afternoon the day after tomorrow, this temple will be destroyed by a storm. I am now living as a big catfish in a puddle underneath. When the temple falls down, I shall appear in the garden. Please help me and set me free in the Kamo River." Upon awakening Jokaku told his family, and they wondered what the dream meant.

Two days later the temple collapsed in a great storm, and a large catfish swam up to Jokaku. Without a moment's thought he speared it with an iron rod and was quite pleased with his catch. He wanted to cook it, but his wife scolded him for killing the fish from his dream. He gave no heed and replied, "Father will be quite happy as long as no one except [his son] and grandsons eat him." He boiled the fish and ate it with his sons. "The reason this fish is so tasty must be that it's my father's flesh." Just then a big bone pierced his throat, and he later died in pain. His wife was so horrified that she never ate catfish again.<sup>5</sup>

In his dream Jokaku perceives another layer of reality. He is willing to believe that the catfish is his father, but fails to carry out its request and thus loses his life. In this respect I do not think he actually believes the dream, because for him that catfish's assertion about being his father seems to be nothing more than a joke. The theme of the story in terms of traditional morality is filial piety, but it can be given many interpretations from the standpoint of depth psychology. I find the following points to be particularly striking:

Eating is a primitive expression of identification, and eating the flesh of one's forbears is one example. We might expect that the son would transmit his father's soul by consuming the latter's flesh, but I have found no evidence for this in Japanese literature. In this story the father dies, and it is the grandson who transmits the grandfather's soul. The mother must live on to protect the grandchildren, and we thus have the triad of the mother, son, and the soul of the grandfather, an important constellation in the psychic life of the Japanese.

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<sup>5</sup> *USM*, Ch. 13, No. 8 (168).

When this episode is compared with the myth of Oedipus, two important differences become apparent: First, although both Oedipus and the man in this story kill their fathers, the Japanese son is aware that he is killing his father whereas Oedipus only learned this after the fact. Second, the Japanese murder is motivated by the desire to eat and not by the desire for power or sex. The appetite for food is more connected to the body than the other two.

#### 4. *I and the Other*

The relation between others and myself is very subtle. Although we may feel that you and I are clearly distinct, there are many interpenetrating components, especially in the dream world. The following story shows how this interpenetration manifested itself in the people of medieval Japan:

In the town of Tsukuma in Shinano Province there was a medicinal hot spring. A man living nearby had a dream in which a voice said to him, "At midday tomorrow the bodhisattva Kannon will come to the hot spring." The man asked how the deity would make his appearance, and the voice replied that a bearded warrior about thirty years old would come riding on a horse, and went on to describe his outfit and gear.

Upon awakening the man told some others about his dream, and many people gathered to clean the hot spring and decorate it with flowers. Around two in the afternoon a warrior fitting the description from the dream came riding on a horse. Everyone stood up and bowed before him in prostration. Utterly surprised, the warrior asked them what they were doing, but no one answered; they simply continued to bow. Finally a priest from among them gave him an explanation. The warrior said that the reason he had come to the medicinal spring was that he had been injured when he fell off his horse while hunting. However, everyone just continued to worship him. He remained perplexed for some time, and then the thought occurred to him, "I am actually Kannon; I must become a monk." He threw away his weapons and became a monk, and the people were deeply moved.

He went on to become a disciple of the famous priest Kakucho, and it was said that he lived in the province of Tosa thereafter.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *USM*, Ch. 6, No. 7 (89).

This story is noteworthy in that a man comes to find himself through someone else's dream. Before arriving at the hot spring he never doubts his identity as a warrior and is quite puzzled that others would regard him as Kannon simply on the basis of a voice in a dream. Yet, in the end he accepts this and becomes a monk. I like the fact that the story does not say the former warrior became a famous priest or saved many people. He is just an ordinary monk. That is enough to be a bodhisattva.

Most people would think such a warrior strange or weak because he determined his identity not by his own will or thought but through a stranger's dream, and I am sure that many Japanese would feel the same. However, this tendency is still at work on a subconscious level in the everyday life of the Japanese. Evidence for this can be seen in the use of the Japanese words for "I." There are many terms for the first person singular, such as *watakushi*, *boku*, *ore*, and *uchi*. The choice depends entirely on the circumstance and the person being addressed. In this respect it can be said that the Japanese finds "I" solely through the existence of others.

However, if this aspect is over-emphasized, one might conclude that the Japanese are so passive as to accept everything that comes their way and that they have no autonomy. The actual situation is more subtle. In order to help us understand personal autonomy in a Japanese context, let me refer to another dream episode from the *USM*:

There was a man named Yoshio Tomo-no-Dainagon who was an attendant of the chief of Sado Province. He had a dream that he was standing with one foot on Todaiji and the other on Saidaiji [two major temples located in the east and west of the city of Nara, respectively]. When he told his wife about this dream, she interpreted it and said, "Your body will be torn in two." Yoshio was startled and thought that he had done something wrong.

Later he went to see his lord who was skilled in reading faces. He invited Yoshio to enter and was unusually kind to him. Remembering what his wife had said, Yoshio became suspicious and thought that his lord was plotting to harm him. However, his lord told him that his face showed he had seen an auspicious dream; he had simply related it to the wrong person. As a consequence, he would get a high position in the course of his life but would be implicated in some

crime. Sometime later Yoshio moved to Kyoto and received a high appointment but was accused of wrongdoing and lost his position. Everything turned out as his lord had said.<sup>7</sup>

This story shows the importance of the dreamer's attitude. Although Yoshio had an auspicious dream, his carelessness leads to misfortune. The next story illustrates the importance of keeping a dream secret:

A certain man overheard a dream being told to a dream interpreter who told the dreamer that he would become a minister of state. Afterwards the first man asked the interpreter if he could buy the dream. The interpreter replied that he could, and instructed him to enter the room and relate the dream exactly as the dreamer had done. She gave him the same prediction, and he presented her with a gift. He eventually did become the minister of state while nothing special happened to the man who had actually had the dream.<sup>8</sup>

Like the previous episode, this story shows that having an auspicious dream is not enough. If one is careless it will lose its effect, but if one has a certain reverence, one can even buy dreams.

It is sometimes necessary to have the strength to hold on to them. Otherwise one may lose a blessing or even be subject to misfortune. A merely passive attitude towards dreams does not work.

### 5. *The Concept of Nature*

In considering the correlation between the human and the cosmic, we must ask ourselves what meaning Nature has for us. Jung says that the human being is an *opus contra naturam*. This paradoxical condition makes the issue very complicated, especially when we consider the situation in Japan where the concept of Nature is quite different from that of the West. Strictly speaking, the Japanese had no conception of Nature as such prior to their contact with Western culture.

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<sup>7</sup> USM, Ch. 1, No. 4 (4).

<sup>8</sup> USM, Ch. 13, No. 5 (165).

As I have shown through the dream stories of medieval Japan, there was no distinct demarcation between life and death, reality and fantasy, myself and others. The same holds true for man and Nature. Throughout European history, Nature has been a concept which stands in opposition to culture and civilization, and continues to be objectified by human beings. The word “Nature” was translated into Japanese as *shizen*, 自然. Prior to this we did not have a concept of Nature. When we Japanese wish to talk about “Nature,” we use such expressions as *sansensomoku*, 山川草木 which literally means “the mountains, rivers, grasses, and trees.” Akira Yanabu has pointed out the clear differences between the Japanese *shizen* and “Nature.”<sup>9</sup> Many Japanese today confuse the two, causing a great deal of misunderstanding.

Let us see how the word *shizen*, 自然 was used before the encounter with the West. The term originated in China, and its oldest usage in literature is to be found in the Taoist writings of Lao Tzu (604? - 531 B.C.) and Chuang Tzu. It appears in the last line of the well-known twenty-fifth chapter of the *Tao Te Ching* which reads: *Tao Fa Tzu Jan*, 道法自然. Many attempts have been made to translate this, and here are just a few examples:

“The way conforms to *its own nature*.” (Blackney)

“Tao’s standard is *the Spontaneous*.” (Fung Yu-lan)

“The law of the Tao is *its own being*.” (James Legge)

“Tao follows *its own ways*.” (Wu)

“Tao is *by nature itself*. There is nothing which it could take for its model.” (Ho Shang-Kung)

The difficulty of translating the term 自然 is readily apparent. The first important point is that it is not identical to “Nature.” In fact it is not even a noun, and in pre-modern Japanese literature it was used almost exclusively as an adverb or adjective. It might be said that 自然 expresses a state in which everything flows spontaneously. There is something like an ever-changing flow in which everything – sky, earth, and man – is contained. Because it is like a continual process, it can never be grasped spatio-

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<sup>9</sup> Akira Yanabu, *Honyaku no Shiso*, Heibon-sha, Tokyo, 1977.

temporally, and strictly speaking, cannot be named. This state of was intuitively grasped by the Japanese and was originally read as *jinen* rather than the later *shizen*, which was used to translate “Nature.”<sup>10</sup> The meaning of the two readings was identical until the Meiji Period (late 19th Century) when the latter was applied to the Western concept. *Shizen* never lost its original meaning, and the resulting failure to distinguish *jinen* from “Nature” has been the source of confusion. One point which these two terms do have in common is that both signify the opposite of artificiality. When the Japanese say that they like Nature, they are referring to a mixture of the two. One might say that *jinen* is more comprehensive than “Nature” and represents a standpoint embracing the latter. We may gain a better understanding of the stories I have related if we can sense what is meant by the former term. You and I, humans and Nature, reality and fantasy, flow spontaneously in *jinen*, which transcends all distinctions.

## 6. *Ego, Self and Nature*

When the relation between human beings and the cosmos is examined psychologically, Jung’s understanding of the relation between the ego and the Self becomes very important, and I would like to make use of his standpoint to help clarify the East Asian conception of the Self. I say “conception,” but the Self can never actually be conceptualized.

Jung defined ego as the center of consciousness, and Self as the center of the psyche which encompasses both the realm of the conscious and the unconscious. He also stated that the Self cannot be known directly, but only through symbols and images which are accessible to consciousness. Thus, although the Self is the same for everyone, it appears differently to each person in accordance with the unique contents of his or her consciousness.

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<sup>10</sup> There are several Japanese adaptations of the Chinese readings for any given character. The two largest groupings are the *go on* and *kan on* readings. The former represent the Japanese approximations of the pronunciation of Chinese characters imported during the fifth and sixth centuries, while the latter represent approximations of the official Chinese pronunciations used in the capital of Chang-an during the 7th and 8th Centuries. (“On readings,” *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, First Edition.) “*Jinen*” is the *go on* reading and “*shizen*” is the *kan on* reading.



The Japanese words for ego, Self, and Nature are *jiga*, 自我, *jiko*, 自己, and *jinen*, 自然, respectively. It can be seen that they all have the character *ji*, 自 in common. Other readings for this character include *mizukara* and *onozukara*: paradoxically, they mean “voluntarily, of one’s own free will,” and “spontaneously, of itself.” They may seem contradictory to the Westerner, but not to the Japanese. Perhaps it would be better to say that they are incommensurable from the standpoint of ego consciousness, but not from the standpoint of *jinen*. This two-fold sense of *ji* is contained in the Japanese understanding of ego, Self, and Nature.

Thus it may be said that dreams belong to the ego, the Self, and Nature, and that they all flow in *jinen* as originally understood by the Japanese.

We are led to the conclusion that everything in the cosmos flows as it is, and there is no need to speak of one thing symbolizing another. They are just there.

I have yet to clearly grasp the problem of Self and *jinen*, but I am inclined to say the following: The notion of the Self is basic to the hero myth, and in this context, human consciousness is inextricably bound to the ego. There may be another kind of consciousness in the reality of *jinen*; what Jung called the Self may be important, but in this context, it might be called by any number of names, or perhaps no name at all.

### 7. *The Conscious, the Unconscious, and a Horse*

Freud compared the relationship between the ego and the unconscious to that between a rider and his horse. With this in mind, let us examine the following dream seen by Myôe, a Buddhist priest of the thirteenth century:

There was a big, clear pond. I climbed onto a large horse and played in the pond.  
The horse was unusually well fed. Then [I was] about to set out on a pilgrimage to Kumano.

Myôe goes on to comment:

In [another] dream two or three nights previous, I playfully said, “How I would like to visit Kumano!” The priest Shinsho was there and reprimanded me: “You speak as if [you were] actually not [going].”

I said to myself, “That is not so,” and made a vow to go. [Thus] I reversed [my previous attitude], and now the dream is an auspicious sign [showing] that I truly wish to go. In addition, the large pond stands for meditation, and the horse for consciousness.<sup>11</sup>

Freud might ask, “If the horse stands for consciousness, then what does Myôe the rider stand for?” Before attempting to answer this question, I would like to relate another dream which Myôe had about a year earlier along with his commentary:

I dreamt that I had constructed a pond which [covered an area of] about a half to three quarters of an acre. There was hardly any water in it. A sudden downpour filled the pond with pure, clear water. There was another large pond next to it that seemed to be an old river. When the small one was full, there was [only] about one foot separating it from the larger one. If it rained just a little more, [the small pond] would merge with the larger pond. I felt that if they merged, the fish, turtles, and other [creatures] could move over to the small pond. It seemed to be the fifteenth day of the second month. I thought, “Tonight the moon will rise over this pond and is sure to be splendid.”

Interpretation: The small pond is meditation. The large pond is the fundamental *samadhi* to which all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas have awakened. The fish and other [creatures] are all sages. Each being was deeply significant, and I contemplated this [fact]. The lack of water stands for the time of no practice. Now, even with a little faith, all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas can come through. The absence of fish in the small pond at the beginning [represents] the initial aspiration [for enlightenment].<sup>12</sup>

I have little to add to Myôe's own interpretation. Please note that in the lunar calendar, the moon is full on the fifteenth day of the month.

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<sup>11</sup> Myôe Koben, *Myôe Shonin Yume no Ki* (MSYK), in *Myôe Shonin Shu*, compiled by Jun Kubota and Akio Yamaguchi, Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1981, pp. 85-86 (389). I am indebted to Dr. George Joji Tanabe who has translated the entire *Dream Diary* as an appendix to his doctoral thesis on Myôe. I have made extensive use of his version in making my own translations. (George Joji Tanabe Jr., *Myôe Shonin (1173-1232): Tradition and Reform in Early Kamakura Buddhism*, Columbia University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1983) The corresponding page numbers for Dr. Tanabe's translation appear in parentheses.

<sup>12</sup> MSYK, p. 77 (89).

The splendid full moon represents the fullness of deep meditation, but the fact that Myôe is absent indicates that he saw the truth but did not experience it. He is waiting for the fundamental *samadhi* of the large pond to flow into the small one. Returning to the first dream I mentioned (which took place about one year later), we find Myôe riding on a horse and about to set out on a pilgrimage to Kumano, one of the major centers of religious worship in Japan. One might say that he made the transition from observer to actor, except that Myôe tells us the horse stands for consciousness, not himself.

Then what does Myôe stand for? My answer is that he is *jinen*, the spontaneous flow of being. My translation reads, "Then [I was] about to set out on a pilgrimage to Kumano," but the subject is omitted in the original as is often the case in Japanese. It might be interesting to think that the subject is neither the horse nor Myôe, but *jinen*, which includes both.

#### 8. *A Constitution Based on Jinen*

Myôe lived during one of the most important periods of Japanese political history. In the Jokyu Disturbance of 1221, an attempt by the retired Emperor Go-Toba's imperial faction to wrest control from the military government failed. This led to an increase in the political power of the government in Kamakura, and Yasutoki Hojo became the military regent in the imperial capital of Kyoto. Myôe greatly influenced Yasutoki, who made many revolutionary changes based on the former's world-view. This does not mean that Yasutoki made Buddhism or Myôe's Hua-yen the state religion. On the contrary there is virtually no external evidence of Myôe's contribution, which was actually more far-reaching than the establishment of religious institutions.

Until Yasutoki became the regent, the Japanese constitution had been basically an imitation of the Chinese. Yasutoki felt the necessity for a new order, but it was neither possible nor desirable to abolish the old system. He skillfully put his ideals into effect by establishing a catalogue of practical law which did not replace the constitution, at least not in appearance. He stressed the fact that the old law did not fulfill the needs of the

present age, and said the new catalogue consisted of what he simply felt was reasonable, that it was not based on anything in particular. To effect such a comprehensive transformation of the national constitution and say that it was based on nothing is remarkable. The power of the new catalogue can be understood as a reflection of *jinen*.

Yasutoki once asked Myôe how to rule the nation, and the latter replied that a statesman should be like a good doctor who cures an illness by rooting out its real cause. The cause of disturbance in Japan was greed, and if Yasutoki wished to remedy this, he had to abolish his own. Yasutoki expressed doubt that others would remain greedy even if he were able to get rid of his own desire. Myôe answered that if Yasutoki really became free of his own, the entire nation would naturally follow. It is the idea that the state one attains is the state of the world. Yasutoki actually made efforts to put Myôe's advice into practice and has been praised as a noble statesman ever since.

Myôe did not say how the nation would be freed of desire if Yasutoki eliminated his. The former explained neither the relationship between an individual and his world, nor the nature of one person's influence on another. In order to understand the basis of Myôe's advice, we must examine the teaching of the Hua-yen.

### 9. *Yüan-ch'i in the Hua-yen School*

Although Myôe was relatively open to the various Buddhist schools and teachings which had found their way to Japan, he was primarily a student of the Hua-yen School. In the *Hua-yen Ching*, or *The Sutra of the Flower Garland*, all things freely interpenetrate each other. This complete mutual penetration and permeation is beautifully captured in a phrase which appears often: "Even a speck of dust contains all the Buddhas."

In 1980, Toshihiko Izutsu gave a talk on the philosophy of the Hua-yen. I would like to quote a passage from his presentation in order to illuminate just one aspect of Hua-yen thought, the notion of *yüan-ch'i* (Jap. *Engi*) as elaborated by the Chinese Hua-yen master, Fa-Ts'ang (643-712):



... nothing in this world exists independently of others. Everything depends for its phenomenal existence upon everything else. All things are correlated with one another. All things mutually originate ... Thus the universe in this vista is a tightly structured nexus of multifariously and manifoldly interrelated ontological events, so that even the slightest change in the tiniest part cannot but effect all the other parts.<sup>13</sup>

The quintessence of the Hua-yen *yüan-ch'i* is “the dynamic, simultaneous, and interdependent emergence and existence of all things.” It is important to note here that *yüan-ch'i* is not based on linear causality. Izutsu uses the following diagram to illustrate the Huayen cosmology.

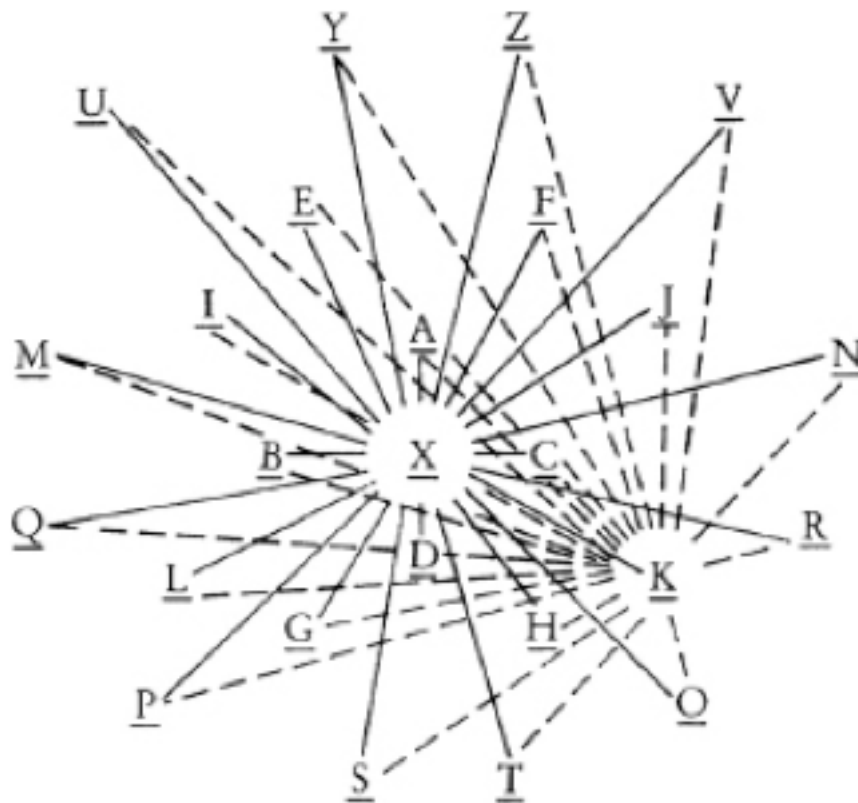


Figure 2. Illustration of *yüan-ch'i* thinking

In this diagram each letter stands for some phenomenon or entity. From the standpoint of “X,” all other phenomena (“A,” “B,” “C,” ...) are the formative factors of “X.”

<sup>13</sup> Toshihiko Izutsu, “The Nexus of Ontological Events: A Buddhist View of Reality” in *Eranos 49-1980*, pp. 384-85.

The situation is the same from the standpoint of any other phenomenon, such as “K,” “A,” “B,” “C,” and so on, ad infinitum. I feel that this diagram aptly describes the Kannon story. The warrior comes to the realization that he is Kannon through the formative influence of the people around him, who correspond to the letters in this diagram. It is said in the *Hua-yen Ching*:

If one begins to seek to become a bodhisattva, one will understand that a small world is a large world, and a large world, a small world. Moreover, a small world is many worlds, and many worlds, a small world. A wide world is a narrow world. A world is limitless. A defiled world is a pure world, and a pure world, a defiled world.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, one is all, and all is one. Because Myôe had awakened to this truth himself, he was able to advise Yasutoki that if he behaved correctly, the whole nation would follow.

If one is all, the problem of individual identity presents itself: How can “A” be distinguished from “B”? Izutsu explained this in terms of Fa-Ts’ang’s notion of ontological “powerfulness” and “powerlessness.” Each phenomenon (“A,” “B,” “C,” ...) possesses identical contents, but takes on various appearances according to the amount of power being exerted by any given element:

Those elements that happen to be “powerless” in a thing are not manifest, only the “powerful” and dominant elements being empirically actualized. Nevertheless they are there, all of them as part of the depth-structure of the thing, supposing, as it were, from below the phenomenal subsistence of the thing as that very thing.<sup>15</sup>

From the standpoint of depth psychology, I would like to say that the meaning of “powerless” and “powerful” becomes relative, and depends upon the condition of consciousness. To ordinary consciousness, only the manifestations of “powerful” elements

<sup>14</sup> *Hua-yen Ching*. The *Hua-yen Ching* has been translated into English by Thomas Cleary, *The Flower Ornament Scripture: The Avatamsaka Sutra*, Volume I, Shambhala, Boston, 1984; *The Flower Ornament Scripture: The Avatamsaka Sutra*, Volume II, Shambhala, Boston, 1986.

<sup>15</sup> Izutsu, *ibid.*, p. 391.

are visible, but perhaps in other realms (such as the dream state), “powerless” components can be seen as well. One’s father appears as a catfish, or one can stand with one foot on Todaiji Temple and the other on Saidaiji.

I would like to relate another dream that Myôe had:

I thought I was going somewhere. Then I arrived at the gate of the Great Minister of Ichijo, where there was a single black dog. It rubbed itself against my feet and became very friendly. I had thought in my mind that I had raised this dog in years past. I did not see it when I went out to-day; I arrived at this gate and was waiting for it. I had wondered when it would come here; now we are together and we should not part. That dog was like a pony; it was a young dog with fur of dazzling color. It seemed as if it had been brushed with a comb.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps the friendly black dog which he thought he had raised is a “powerless” component in him which he had not been conscious of. It is a sign of Myôe’s wisdom that once he had become aware of its existence, he decides they should not part. It is important to accept the existence of “powerless” elements in oneself, whether they take the form of a black dog or something else. Here is another dream from about the same time:

[During my early evening meditation, when I wished to perform esoteric practices], there was a very dignified, beautiful lady in a room. Her clothing was exquisite, but she showed no sign of worldly desire. I was in the same place, but I did not feel any affection for her and ignored her. She was quite fond of me and did not wish to be separated. I [continued to] ignore her and left. She still showed no sign of worldly desire. The lady held a mirror around which she wrapped some wire. She also held a large sword.

Interpretation: The woman was [the Buddha] Vairocana: she was certainly the queen.<sup>17</sup>

Myôe strictly adhered to the monastic code, and unlike most priests of his time, obeyed the precept which forbids touching of women. His attitudes are reflected in this dream, since he rejects the woman who does not want to be separated from him and

<sup>16</sup> MSYK, p. 90 (131).

<sup>17</sup> MSYK, p. 89 (12).

leaves her. In the interpretation, however, he tells us that she is the Tathagata Vairocana, the Sun Buddha, who is the central figure of the *Hua-yen Ching*. Although Vairocana is cosmic and transcendental, he is usually depicted in male form. The fact that Myôe calls Vairocana “the queen” indicates that he sees the female aspect of the deity.

According to the Hua-yen view of *yüan-ch’i* Vairocana is manifest in all phenomena, but Myôe’s choice to observe the precept on women entails a rejection of an aspect of the deity. I believe this is what Myôe meant by his interpretation. A priest is supposed to maintain the monastic code, but doing so paradoxically implies the exclusion of a part of one’s eternal reality. There is no way to have both. One must make an exclusive choice with full commitment and be aware of the dark side which necessarily accompanies it.

### 10. *Turning Point*

What is the role of the human being in the reality of *jinen* if everything including the former is simply flowing spontaneously of itself? In other words, what is the role of the ego? In the East the importance of diminishing the power of the ego has been emphasized in order to make one’s life conform to *jinen*, but I do not feel that this provides a satisfactory answer. In order to probe this question more deeply, let us turn to another episode from the *USM* which has evolved into the well-known folk tale, “The Straw Millionaire”:

A young warrior who was completely alone in this world arrived at the temple of Hasedera where a statue of Kannon was enshrined. He prayed to Kannon and vowed not to leave until he received a message in a dream. Afraid that he would starve and cause a disturbance, the monks of the temple offered him some food. Twenty-one days later, he had a dream in which a man emerged from the altar where Kannon was enshrined and told the warrior to leave and keep everything which came into his possession.

Just as he went through the temple gate, he fell down and clutched a single stalk of straw. Remembering the dream, he got up and walked on with the straw in his hand. Shortly thereafter a fly began to pester him, so he tied it to the end of his straw. Further down the road a woman of



the nobility, her son, and their retinue were approaching on their way to worship at Hasedera. The son said that he wished to have the fly and straw, and the warrior told one of the retainers: "Although these are gifts from the Buddha, I will give them to him." The mother was grateful for his generosity and gave him three oranges. He thought, "A single stalk of straw has been transformed into three oranges."

Another woman of the nobility approached with her retinue; one of her servants told the warrior that she was tired and thirsty but that they could not find any water for her. The warrior offered her the oranges, and she gave him three rolls of cloth as an expression of her gratitude. He thought, "The stalk of straw has become three rolls of cloth."

The next day he saw a man riding on a magnificent horse but the latter suddenly died before his eyes. Thinking that this was a sign the horse was meant to be his, he bought the horse with a roll of cloth. He then turned towards the Kannon enshrined at Hasedera and prayed, "Please bring this horse back to life." The horse opened its eyes and stood up, and he was overjoyed. He exchanged the other two rolls of cloth for a saddle and other gear and set off for Kyoto. There he exchanged the horse for a house and rice fields, and he eventually became a wealthy man.<sup>18</sup>

The young warrior is quite passive, just accepting what comes his way. However, his attitude changes when he sees the horse die. He actively seeks to purchase the horse and prays to Kannon to resurrect it. It is a great gamble on his part, for no one expects the horse to revive. This act of full commitment is the turning point of the story. Similar scenes can be found in many Japanese stories, and constitute the most important point in the development of the protagonist.

Without the turning point, the hero would have been destroyed by his own passivity. But such points cannot be realized without full commitment, which is in turn accompanied by danger. If the horse had not revived, the hero would have been lost.

How and when does a person know that his turning point has come? What are the criteria for determining it? The answer is obvious: Follow *jinen*. I know this is meaningless from the so-called scientific point of view, but perhaps my point can be made more apparent by examining the notion of individuality.

When one's individuality is established by means of making clear distinctions between oneself, others, things, and Nature, many general laws for observing the world

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<sup>18</sup> *USM*, Ch. 7, No. 5 (96).

can be discovered. By applying these laws Nature can be efficiently controlled. However, one cannot establish one's uniqueness as long as one is under the rule of the collective consciousness; a catfish remains a catfish and a warrior cannot become Kannon. The objective path to individuality does not allow one's father to become a catfish or a warrior to become a bodhisattva.

On the other hand, one may lead a unique life if one is open to others. Yet, this path is open to danger; one may believe that a catfish can be one's father, but also lose one's life. In Jungian terms, one's individuality may be lost in the collective unconscious.

A truly individual life requires unique turning points as well as general rules. Although by definition there are no rules for these turning points, we can increase our sensitivity to them through reading stories with full commitment. Our dreams are actually these stories, bestowed upon each of us in the realm beyond distinctions, in *jinen*.

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