Sekkyô and the Tale of Terute:  
Authorizing the Role of Women (Part 2)

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Introduction

The figure of Terute-hime looms large in the cultural imaginary of Japan. A brief search on the web (September 2014) tells us that Terute-hime is both the name of a flowering peach tree and a racehorse (JoTerute-hime). Her name, as well as bits and pieces of her story, are engraved on the landscape of Japan through her association with natural and man-made features; including graves, wells, and small, bucolic pools of water. Along the coast of Northern Ibaragi I travelled last year through the town of Kawaharago (河原子) - a name resonant with “kawaramono” – a term used to refer to those nomadic men and women - like Terute - found themselves living at the fringes of Japanese society in settlements and along river banks with no fixed abode in the Muromachi Period (1336–1573.) Where possible they made their living as jailers, sellers of fragrances or candle wicks, as those who dealt with the dead or received compensation for chasing birds from fields of grain or other crops. Among these marginalized populations were sekkyô-sha – the men and women who told and retold the story of Terute (among other tales) through the performative genre of sekkyô or sermon ballads. It is this figure of Terute – as conceived and narrated in the sekkyô repertoire, specifically in the sermon ballad known as Oguri Hangan – who commands the respect and adoration of the Japanese people.

On continuing north along the Ibaragi coast I reached the shore at Takahagi (高萩) - a place name that can also be read as “Kohagi,” the same name Terute assumes in the narrative of the sermon ballad after being sold to a brothel at Aohaka. Cast off from her family after her father attempts to kill her, Terute is sold into slavery and forced to work at a brothel where the prostitutes she serves as a water maid give her the name Kohagi. The story of Terute/Kohagi and her betrayal at the hands of her family, of her love for a warrior for whom she risks her life, her strength of character in the face of tremendous adversity as well as her own compassion for the disfigured and disabled, is a story that has been recited, chanted, printed and performed in jôrui, sekkyô, nara-ehon, ukiyoe, kabuki, shingeki, butoh and more recently, in manga. Ando Hiroshige (1797–1858) includes Terute’s image in one edition of 53 Stations of the Tokaido (Two Brushes Edition) where she appears at Fujisawa, the Seventh Station, pulling the cart bearing her disabled lover.

Fig. 1. Ando Hiroshige, 53 Stations of the Tokaido by Two Brushes, Seventh Station: “Fujisawa” (Maruya Kishiro,1857) 22 May 2015,Web.

Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861) chose to portray Terute as a hero when he included her in his series of woodblock prints of memorable women, titled “Biographies of Wise Women and Virtuous Wives”
Above is Utagawa’s rendering of Terute/Kohagi where she appears barefoot. In a scene similar to that of Hiroshige she is pulling a wheeled cart carrying her disabled partner after having taken time off from her work as a water maid in Aohaka to pull the cart toward the healing waters of Kumano.

Terute’s persona began as purported fact in the latter 15th century text titled Kamakura Ōzôshi (鎌倉大草紙). According to this chronicle, Terute is the name of a courtesan who saves the life of a warrior named Oguri Sukeshige by advising him not to drink poisoned sake. The chronicle relates that after saving his life, Terute, together with Oguri, flee to Mikawa (present day Aichi Prefecture.) Nearly 200 years later, and between 1624 and 1655, Iwasa Matabei Katsumochi (1578-1650), also known as Ukiyo Matabei, produced an emaki titled Okuri (おくり) in which Terute again makes her appearance, amidst a full-blown narrative recounting her life story; her family, her meeting with Oguri that occasions her exile, her subsequent religious conversion and her ultimate reunion with Oguri. The emaki text is formidable – running to approximately one quarter of a mile in length and consisting of 15 scrolls of text and elaborate illustrations. Terute’s story and the depictions of her spiritual practice as found in Muroki Yatarō’s translation are largely based on the emaki text and greatly distinguish the figure of Terute from the figure as found in the Kamakura chronicle. My own interest is in the nature of Terute’s heroism as found in the Muroki and emaki narratives. My intent is to show that Tertue’s “heroic” behavior is constructed as a direct result of Tertue’s spiritual practice, most notably through her on-going relation with Kannon Bosatsu. Depictions of Terute’s spiritual practice in Muroki’s text concern me because this text clearly indicates that it is on account of Terute’s spirituality that she able to transcend the limits of ordinary human behavior.

In the process of this exploration of female spiritual practice in medieval Japan through the figure of Terute, I rely on the work of Dee Dyas and her research on spiritual practice as developed in an English cultural framework. In doing so, I am responding to the invitation of Gyatri Spival who calls for scholars to work towards a transnational feminism – a feminism that finds value in female experience on a global scale. In other words, I will be exploring the figure of Terute in a cross-cultural framework to see what Dyas and her notions of pilgrimage in an English cultural framework (700-1500) can tell us about notions of female spiritual practice in Japan during the Muromachi Period (1336 - 1573.) Passages concerning Terute’s narrative included below are taken from the Muroki text titled Oguri (おぐり) and my own translations are taken from my Master’s thesis at Columbia University that I later included in my dissertation for the English Department at The University of North Dakota. The images concerning Terute that follow are taken from the emaki scroll.

Pilgrimage as Narrative Frame

Using Dyas’s analysis I would like to explore the ways in which Terute engages in spiritual practice and how these modalities of practice lend dynamic interest to her figure in the Muroki sekkyô text. It seems to me that Terute sustains her religious practice through her on-going negotiation with the demands of what Dyas has conceived in terms of interior, moral and place pilgrimage. This multivalent practice encompassing
these three modalities of pilgrimage both endangers Terute’s life and renders her not only a heroic female figure but a heroic figure for female spirituality as well.

The English word “pilgrim” is derived from the Latin root *peregrinus* (*per*, through + *ager*, field, country, land) denoting “a foreigner, an alien, one who is on a journey” and *peregrinato* as the state of being or living abroad (Dyas 1). In the context of Christianity (and according to Dyas) the meaning of pilgrimage has evolved through the Christian ages to constitute a “mosaic” of interrelated concepts; including exile, wandering, sojourning, meditation, mysticism, inner journey and inner growth, abandonment of worldly pleasures and expressions of devotion. Common to all these myriad practices and ideas of what constitutes a “religious” life is the idea of a journey. For the practicing Christian, life on earth is an on-going state of peregrination wherein the subject is under a condition of deferment. Religious fulfillment in this context is realized when the Christian subject is in the presence of God; that is, having reached his or her spiritual home as found in “heaven” – in a life after death.

In her examination of Christian religious practice in medieval English culture, Dyas deconstructs the notion of “pilgrimage,” breaking the meaning down into three inherently different modes that encompass three different conceptions of religious practice (see below.)

**interior pilgrimage** (stability)
- monasticism
- meditation
- mystic
- Margery Kempe

**moral pilgrimage** (stability)
- active life/day to day
- avoiding 7 deadly sins
- obedience to God
- Parson’s Tale (Chaucer)

**place pilgrimage** (mobility)
- journeying to saints’ shrines/ holy places
- an act of travel to be undertaken
- Knight’s Tale (Chaucer)

Interior pilgrimage refers to a journey as undertaken through meditation and prayer and is a modality for spirituality in which one removes themselves from the world and retires to the monastic, solitary life of an anchorite or coenobitic. While moral pilgrimage underscores the need for moral introspection on a day-to-day basis with respect to obedience to God within the framework of the Seven Deadly Sins, both these notions of pilgrimage involve an understanding of what it means to live a spiritual life. There is no mobility in either interior or moral pilgrimage and no physical journey to be undertaken. In fact, as Dyas makes amply clear, travel to an earthly destination was under deep suspicion from the point of view of moral and interior pilgrimage in medieval England.

Place pilgrimage, as a specific task or act to be carried out, requires travelling to meet with divinity at a specific site, with all the dangers and temptations that journey entails. Travel and its inherent distractions and/or temptations - when viewed from the frame of moral and interior pilgrimage - would compromise, if not sabotage, ones deepening spiritual progress enacted through the stability of one’s practice in one’s own home and/or daily life. The modality of place pilgrimage is potentially in conflict with both modalities of moral and interior pilgrimage. Dyas uses these three distinct and at times conflicting notions of pilgrimage to work through an analysis of medieval religious practice as well as in medieval narratives such as *Piers Plowman* and *Canterbury Tales*. For the purposes of this essay, I will be using her notions of the three modalities of pilgrimage to work through an analysis of Terute’s narrative as found in the Muroki text. My intent is to set Dyas’s notions of spiritual practice at play in a cross-cultural setting through my analysis of Muroki’s *sekkyō* narrative concerning the figure of Terute.

**Interior Pilgrimage**

As the youngest of six children, and one girl among five brothers, Terute is the daughter of a wealthy landowner, Yokoyama, who falls in love with a warrior named Oguri. Oguri’s intrusion into Yokoyama’s home as Tertue’s lover angers Tertue’s father to the degree that he plots to kill Oguri with poison sake. Thinking that he has succeeded in killing Oguri, Yokoyama...
then believes that by killing his own daughter he will observe a code of honor that promises to atone for the murder of Oguri. Convinced that he is doing the “right” thing, he orders his sons to imprison Terute in a palanquin and take her to be drowned in a nearby river. Terute’s interior pilgrimage begins at this juncture, when her family has turned against her and she is plunged into what moderns would perhaps describe as an existential crisis. In defying her father and taking Oguri as her lover she has made a move that initiates her betrayal at the hands of her entire family. Cast out from the only world she has known, betrayed by those for whom she had absolute trust, alone and destined for death at the hands of her father, and from inside the blackness of her prisoner palanquin, she experiences her first mystic encounter with the Buddhist deity, Kannon Bosatsu:

In the darkness of the palanquin, an image of enclosure that Dyas points out as characteristic of the experience of an anchorite on interior pilgrimage, Terute’s fervent prayers and meditations in the midst of an existential crisis occasion her initial communion with the (Buddhist) divine and results in her rescue.

**Negotiating Subject Positions in Contesting Modes of Pilgrimage**

Terute, still trapped inside the darkness of the prisoner palanquin, is found by a group of fisherman who break open her enclosure with their oars. Thinking she is a demon who has caused their catch to dwindle, they threaten to beat her to death. Instead, the head fisherman rescues Terute and brings her to his home. Amidst Terute’s apparently deepening spiritual awareness, she decides to go on place pilgrimage. The fisherman who rescued her wants to join Terute, and what follows is a moment that instantiates what Dyas considers to be the contested nature of place pilgrimage. The fisherman’s wife becomes enraged at the notion that Terute will embark on place pilgrimage with her mate, and in fearing that Terute’s beauty is luring her husband away from her, attempts to smoke Terute among pine boughs in order to disfigure the young woman and make her repugnant to her husband. Once more in crisis, Terute is now subject to the betrayal of a women for whom she wishes no harm. Engulfed in smoke on a platform built among the trees, Kannon returns to Terute’s aid (riding a cloud as seen below) in order to rescue Terute. Terute (just visible on the platform beneath the thatch and amidst black smoke) survives the ordeal unscathed due to Kannon’s divine intervention.
The tension inherent between the modality of interior pilgrimage - as imaged by the divine encounter with Kannon inside the enclosure of her prisoner palanquin, and the modality of place pilgrimage as imaged in Terute’s desire to leave on pilgrimage with her rescuer - are clearly explored in the context of this tale. Terute’s attempts to integrate these two modalities jeopardize her life while at the same time appear to deepen her religious practice by providing more opportunities for her to engage with the salvational powers of Kannon Bosatsu. The spiritual fruits of interior pilgrimage appear to have encouraged Terute in her desire for place pilgrimage and yet, it is through the modality of place pilgrimage that Terute is made vulnerable to criticism and attack. Though Terute has survived this second encounter with death through her spiritual connection with Kannon, the fisherman’s wife succeeds in selling Terute (unbeknownst to her husband) at market. Terute is now a single woman adrift. Exiled from her family, she has no fixed abode and despite being the daughter of wealthy parents, no discernable means of earning a living. Bought and sold dozens of times, she is eventually sold to the innkeeper of a brothel at Aohaka.

**Moral Pilgrimage**

The tensions inherent in the three pilgrim modalities as described by Dyas are further explored when Terute is purchased and brought to the Inn at Aohaka. The innkeeper attempts to convince Terute to work as a prostitute and gives her a new name, Hitachi Kohagi. Terute will have to choose between earning her living as a prostitute or serving those prostitutes as a water maid. The innkeeper queries her:

「さてこれの内にはの、さて百人の流れの姫がありけるが、その下の水仕はの、十六人してつかまつる。十六人の下の水仕をば、御身一人して申さうか。十二単で身を飾り、流れを立てうかの。あけすけ好まい、小萩殿」 (Muroki 266)  
Will you be a water maid and do the work of 16 women? Or, will you make your living adorned with 12 splendid robes? Choose without hesitation, Lady Kohagi!” (Morrison 197)

Terute replies:

「愚かな長殿の御諚やな。たとはばそれがしに、千手観音の御手ほどあればとて、その十六人の下の水仕がの、自ら一人してなるものか。承ればそれも女人の所職と承る。たとはば十六人の下の水仕は申すとも、流れにおいてはの、え立てまいよの、長殿様」 (Muroki 266).  
“How foolish your words! Even if I had the arms of Thousand-Armed Kannon how could I, just one person, handle the work of 16 women? Acceptance, however, is of itself, a woman’s work. Even though I will do the work of 16 to provide water, I will not prostitute myself to earn a living!” (Morrison 197)
presence in Terute’s daily life. The presence of the divine may be read as an indication of Tertue’s success in negotiating the demands of moral pilgrimage (religious devotion in the context of daily life and her choice of work as a water maid) with those of interior pilgrimage (religious devotion in the context of a monastic life/her mystic encounter with Kannon in the darkness of the palanquin.) As a result, she has engendered the constant and divine presence of Kannon. This relation endows Tertue with superhuman (heroic) powers:

Though Hitachi Kohagi was summoned here to so this, there to do that, she was under the divine protection of Kannon who accompanied her as speedily she brought the work of providing water for 16 people performed for ages past, to an end. (Morrison 197-198)

As Terute engages in heroic feats of strength due to her spiritual relation with Kannon, the prostitutes she works with are witness to her daily spiritual practice (as required under the modality of moral pilgrimage) and take counsel among themselves:

「年にも足らぬ女房の、後生大事とたしなむに、いざや醜名を付けて呼ばん」とて、常陸小萩を引き換えて、念仏小萩とお付けある。 (Muroki 267)

“Because you are such a young woman as to concern yourself with the after life, we will give you a nick-name.” Instead of Hitachi Kohagi they now call her Nenbutsu Kohagi. (Morrison 198)

Terute’s encounter within the modality of moral pilgrimage is so intense that the women around her give her a new name on account of the fervency of Terute’s daily prayers (nenbutsu). “Nenbutsu” indicates the devotional practice of intoning the name of the Buddha while “Kohagi” is the name for the common Japanese bush clover. This change of name signifies Terute’s (now manifest) spiritual commitment – a commitment so intense that those around her have acknowledged Terute’s shift of consciousness as revealed through her own daily spiritual practice by giving her a name that instantiates the manifold presence of the Buddha in daily life.

Place Pilgrimage

In the meantime, Oguri – presumed dead by Terute – has been undergoing his own hardships. Having visited Enma, the king of hell, he has returned to the living world under Enma’s directive in a guise quite different from his former self. The head priest of Yogyôji at Fujisawa has found Oguri in a field in the form of a disabled man, now so disfigured as to be unrecognizable. The priest places Oguri on a cart with a placard that directs all who encounter him to pull his cart to the life restoring springs at Kumano. When the cart on which Oguri has been placed appears in front of the inn at Aohaka, Terute feels the need (once again) for place pilgrimage and manages, with a great deal of finesse, to negotiate for five days off from her work as water maid at the brothel in order to accomplish the task of pulling the cart toward the healing springs of Kumano. Terute, thinking how inappropriate it would appear for a woman working at a brothel to embark on place pilgrimage:

… また長殿に駆けもどり、古き烏帽子を申し受け、さんての髪に結び付け、丈と等せの黒髪をさつと乱いて、面には油煙の墨をお塗りあり、さて召したる小袖をば、すそを肩へと召しないで、笹の葉にしてを付け、心は物に狂はねど、姿を狂気にもってなて … (Muroki 278-279)

…ran back to the inn and took an old eboshi cap, then messing up her once orderly hair, she plastered soot on her face. Putting on an informal kosode, she tied up her sleeves and took up a frond of bamboo so that people would treat her as if she were insane, though in her heart she was not. (Morrison 206)
In her second attempt at place pilgrimage Terute appears to have learned from past experience. She now has a better grasp of the dangers and suspicions inherent in attempting to embark on place pilgrimage; especially as a single woman in medieval Japan. As such, she takes steps to protect herself from the suspicions of others. By negotiating intelligently with her superiors and taking on another identity in order to pass as a madwoman, Terute manages to accomplish her place pilgrimage that entails pulling the cart of a disabled man toward Kumano. Having accomplished her task she, leaves the cart at Tamaya (tama=soul or spirit, ya=store) before returning to work at the brothel. I would like to suggest that Terute’s heroism is on account of her devoted religious practice as revealed in her accomplishment of all three modalities of pilgrimage; interior, moral and place pilgrimage.

Power, Compassion and Transformation
Eventually Oguri and his cart arrive at the springs at Kumano and he is returned to his former, recognizable self on account of Kumano’s healing waters. He returns to the inn at Aohaka where he and Terute are reunited. Outraged to hear of the treatment that Terute has received at the hands of her keepers he threatens to kill the innkeeper, but Terute intervenes:

照手この由きこしめし、「なう、いかに小栗殿。あのやうな慈悲第一の長殿に、いかなる所知をも与へてたまはれの。夫の小栗殿」との御諚なり。（Muroki 294）

Hearing this, Terute pleads, “Lord Oguri! The innkeeper is a man who makes compassion a priority. Please convey to him some sort of land. The reason you should do this is because long ago you were known as a gakiyami and when the time came to pull your cart I asked for three days off. The innkeeper brought together sympathy with compassion, and granted me five days for time off. Lord Oguri, my love, please convey some sort of land to the inn-keeper who has made compassion his number one concern”. (Morrison 217)

Oguri, a warrior by nature who once commanded 10 retainers, responds:

「その儀にてあるならば、御恩の妻に免ずる」（Muroki 294）.

“That being the case, I will defer to my wife.” (Morrison 217)

Clearly Terute is no longer a pitiable, helpless young woman. She has matured into a commanding presence. She speaks with an authority that her warrior husband respects. The personal power that Terute now wields is a direct result of what she has accomplished through the depth of her religious conviction as well as her success in negotiating (and integrating) her subject position among the demands of interior, moral and place pilgrimage.

Undeterred, Oguri now begins to mount an attack on Terute’s father in order to kill him as well.

照手この由きこしめしし、夫の小栗へござありて、「なう、いかに小栗殿。昔を伝へて聞くからに、父の御恩は七逆罪、母の御恩は五逆罪、十二逆罪を得ただにも、それ悲しいと存ずるに、今自らが世に出でたとて、父に弓をばの、え引くまいの、小栗殿。さて明日の横山攻めをば、お止まりあつてたまはれの。そそれがさなうて、いやならば、横山攻めの門出に、さて自らを害召され、さてその後に横山攻めはなされいの」（Muroki 295-6）
Hearing of this, Terute went to her lover, Oguri, "Lord Oguri! As has been heard from long past, turning your back on the debt to one’s father is a sin akin to the seventh and the worst of crimes which is killing a member of the priesthood. Turning your back on the debt to one’s mother is akin to the fifth worst crime which is drawing blood from a Buddha. Now, to return and to use a bow against your father amounts to a terrible situation that altogether will obtain the evils of 12 heinous crimes. Lord Oguri, you cannot pull a bow against him! Please, stop tomorrow’s attack against Yokoyama. If you do not, on your departure for the attack you must kill me, and only after that can you make your attack. (Morrison 218)

At this point Terute is not afraid to die for what she believes is the correct course of action. In this way Terute has attained her heroic stature as she is no less committed to her path that that of any other warrior-hero. Oguri once again replies:

「その儀にてあるならば、御恩の妻に免ずる」
(Muroki 296)
“That being the case, I will defer to my wife”.
(Morrison 218)

When Yokoyama hears that his daughter has intervened and halted Oguri’s attack on himself and his lands in Hitachi, he replies:

「昔が今に至るまで、七珍万宝の数の宝より、我が子に増したる宝はないと、今こそ思ひは知られたり。今はなにをか惜しむべし」
(Muroki 296)
“That only now do I realize that there is not one of the seven precious jewels¹ so dear to me as my child, Terute. Now I should appreciate her!” (Morrison 219)

Terute is now completely transformed in the eyes of the men that surround her. As a fully empowered human being with a clear sense of purpose, her integrity commands the respect of even the most ruthless and fearsome members of her society; a man who attempted to kill her in the past (her father), as well as a warrior (her partner) trained in the business of killing. Where she musters the resources to exert this level of compassion toward the innkeeper who abused her as well as the father who tried to kill her is to be found in the depths of her religious conviction. By reading the story of Terute through the lens provided by Dyas, one is able to understand just how well Terute has been able to manage the demands of her religious practice; a practice that not only saves her life more than once, but enables her to transcend the bounds of human behavior while commanding the respect of those around her.

**Conclusion**

By learning to skillfully negotiate between the contesting demands of interior, moral and place pilgrimage, the figure of Terute serves to indicate that all three forms of pilgrimage can be successfully accommodated. Dyas points to the figure of Margery Kemp “whose tempestuous career was shaped by her desire to simultaneously visit holy places, grow in obedience to God and anticipate the joys of heaven through intimate personal encounters with God” [her italics] (223). The tension between interior, moral and place pilgrimage, between a life of stationary spiritual practice and a life of mobile spiritual practice is a tension that Dyas feels is never resolved by Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales*. In contrast, the figure of Terute is one whose “refusal to choose” between the three pilgrimage modalities, together with her determination to integrate what many would consider irreconcilable” (Dyas 223) creates a female protagonist who is, in terms of pilgrimage modalities, “trivalent” (225).

Terute’s narrative should be understood as a pilgrimage text. The notion of a journey - of exile, of being “foreign,” and “alien” – is at the heart of the story of Terute-hime. How she negotiates her subject position in this climate of radical singularity is what drives the narrative and gives the image of Terute its dynamic pull. The creators and performers of *Oguri* have constructed the image of a female subject who may be said to be trivalent in locating herself amidst the modalities of moral, interior and place pilgrimage. It is Terute’s spiritual practice that supports and engenders her strength of resolve, her compassion and

¹ The seven precious jewels are: the jewel of immortality, the jewel of the sun, the jewel of the moon, the jewel of the wind, the jewel of the fire, the jewel of the earth, and the jewel of the water.
resourcefulness, her integrity, as well as her ability to remain in relation with those who have grievously betrayed her that renders her heroic and continues to draw admirers to this day.

Works Cited


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説教と小栗判官の照手物語：女性の役割の重要性
その2

バーバラ・モリソン

要約
本論文は二つに分れていて、ここ Part 1 は日本の学者の研究をまとめて、説教と女性の役割を明らかにするものである。まず、説教（説経、または説経節）の歴史を見てから、説教者は女性であったことを明らかにする。女性であった説教者について、臼田甚五郎、福田晃、武田衛の研究を分析した上で、小栗判官を語った女性の姿に焦点をあてる。Part 2 は女性が語った小栗判官の主人公照手のイメージを考察し、中世の日本女性の精神性はどういう形であったかを詳しく論じる。

（2015年5月27日受理）